# PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC FOR SECOND MODERNITY:

# THREE CASES FROM THE DISCOURSE OF BARACK OBAMA

A Paper
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major Program:
Speech Communication

October 2011

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

**Title**

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## ABSTRACT

Geiger, Jude Justin. M.A., Department of Communication, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, North Dakota Sate University, October 2011. Presidential Rhetoric for Second Modernity: Three Cases from the Discourse of Barack Obama. Major Professor: Dr. Robert Littlefield.

In this paper, I present studies of three of Barack Obama's speeches. In section two, I analyze Obama's "New Beginning" speech in which he attempts to improve relations between the United States and the Muslim world and find that Obama's speech fulfills the requirements of Neo-Aristotelian analysis and benefits from Obama's ability to view the world from different perspectives. I then study in section three Obama's "Prague Speech," in which the President advocates for the reduction of nuclear arms, and reveal that Obama crafts a new metaphor that centers on a journey in which nations traverse a bridge from the past to the present. Third, in section four I examine Obama's speeches on the liberation movement in Libya from the perspective of narrative criticism. I discover that Obama crafts a new narrative of internationalism that creates a Libyan identity centered on agency. I conclude and describe how Obama's speeches serve as evidence of second modernity and discuss what I have learned during my time at NDSU.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the chair of my committee, Dr. Robert Littlefield, for his support, encouragement, and advice during the process of writing this paper and during my entire time at North Dakota State University. In particular, Dr. Littlefield should be thanked for sparking my interest in Neo-Aristotelian criticism and helping me progress to the study of metaphor and other strategies related to phronesis. From the moment I entered the program, he has always been someone I knew I could turn to, and for that I am grateful. I also would like to thank the additional members of my committee, including Dr. Zoltan Majdik, who introduced me to the concept of phronesis and helped me better understand its connection to narrative theory. Likewise, Dr. Carrie Anne Platt should be thanked; if I had not taken her research methods course, I would not have recognized the relationship between second modernity, phronesis, and constitutive rhetoric, a key insight that helped me develop the unifying framework for these essays. Thanks also are due to Dr. Andrew Mara for the advice and helpful input he provided for this paper, as well as for his ability to respond to my frequently tardy requests on a moment's notice. Furthermore, I must thank Dr. Daniel Klenow, who introduced me to the theories of Ulrich Beck and the concept of second modernity. Finally, thanks are due to Mr. Jeff Przybylo, Chair of the Department of Speech and Theatre at Harper College, for inspiring me to return to graduate school to complete my degree and for convincing me to stick with the process. Without him, this never would have happened.

# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated the activists of the Arab Spring. May your journey take your nations to democracy, not dictatorship.

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# SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

In his "Middle East" speech, President Barack Obama (2011, May 19, paras. 17, 19) stated:

> Shouts of human dignity are being heard across the region. And through the moral force of nonviolence, the people of the region have achieved more change in six months than terrorists have accomplished in decades...The question before us is what role America will play as this story unfolds.

Through these words and the language of earlier speeches, Obama began to cement a new trajectory for American foreign policy with the Middle East and the rest of the world. Such words form the focus of the papers I selected for my final project and have served as key artifacts for my research while at North Dakota State University. When reflecting upon my growth as a student and scholar, I notice a consistent interest in Obama's speeches on foreign policy and how they connect to second modernity, what German Sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992) defines as our current condition. According to Beck (1992), as a result of the success of modernity, an objective world is no longer possible, for scientific certainty no longer exists. Second modernity is a condition in which meaning and identity are uncertain, a condition in which unarmed protestors have the potential to accomplish more in a matter of months than terrorists have accomplished in decades, a condition, unlike postmodernity, in which truth and morality exist, but are never fully certain or knowable.

In what follows, I discuss the use of rhetorical criticism as a research method, Presidential rhetoric as a site for study, and prior scholarship that has examined Obama's rhetoric. I then elaborate on the concept of second modernity and explain why rhetorical strategies that address phronesis and constitutive identity are best suited for this era.

Finally, I preview the remainder of this portfolio and briefly introduce the essays that form its core.

## Rhetorical Criticism

As Foss (2009) explains, rhetoric may be conceptualized as the human use of symbols to communicate, expanding the field of rhetoric beyond the dimensions of traditional public address. Rhetoricians study the products of human beings, not the natural world, and center their research on symbols, human creations that are only indirectly connected to the objects they represent. Rhetorical criticism provides a distinct method to study symbolic communication. Foss (2009) elaborates that rhetorical criticism requires systematic analysis focused on the study of acts, or artifacts, the tangible traces of acts. The purpose of this form of investigation is to not only comment on the artifact but also to better develop rhetorical theory. Beyond basic agreement on the foundations of rhetorical criticism, Burgchardt (2005) reminds us that the meaning of rhetorical criticism has changed over time as scholars have challenged and expanded its boundaries. Perhaps the greatest historical change in the field has been the development of a wide range of rhetorical methods and theories.

Initially, scholars followed the traditions established by Wichelns (1925) in his seminal work in the field. While Wichelns' (1925) Neo-Aristotelian, traditional, and logo-centric approach was dominant for decades, Black (1978) challenged this framework because it assumed a rational audience, focused on the rhetor at the expense of context, and ignored the impact of prior discourse and conventions. Black's scholarship opened the floodgates for new approaches to rhetorical criticism and inspired several generations of scholars. For example, Fisher (1984) questioned the traditional conception of logic

associated with Neo-Aristotelianism and contended that the narrative, or story, created by a rhetor is often more persuasive than traditional logic. Similarly, other scholars, such as Ivie (1987), demonstrated an interest in forms of persuasion that extended beyond traditional logic, such as the use of metaphor. A diverse array of methods reduced the dominance of Neo-Aristotelianism and then replaced it.

At the same time some scholars were attempting to revise and expand the tenets of rhetorical criticism, others were questioning whether we currently existed in the same cultural and political context in which authors such as Wichelns wrote. Some saw a break between modernity, the rhetoric of the past, and what they envisioned as the postmodern rhetoric of the present and future. Critics such as Butler (1990) began to question the stability of knowledge, the neutrality of logic, and even the integrity of the human body. Others, such as McGee (1990), applied these ideas to the field of rhetoric and questioned the unitary, objective and stable nature of texts and artifacts. While scholars such as Butler (1990) and McGee (1990) contend that modernity has ended and a new, postmodern era is being born into existence, more recent scholars, such as Beck (1992), have questioned these claims. While some rhetoricians have engaged in research that resonates with Beck's perspective, none have referenced his work. Following Beck, I contend that we have not completely broken with modernity and that the proper tools for the study for second modernity exist in the resources developed by earlier scholars such as Fisher and Ivie who recognized that modernity was in the process of transition, and responded to this change with new rhetorical tools. Despite their differences, rhetoricians, including future rhetoricians of second modernity, are connected through the approach they employ. In an attempt to find common ground among all of these diverse ideas, DeWinters (2006, p. 388)

concluded, "In all, the work of these scholars attempts to define the strategies employed, determine whether those strategies were effective to a specific rhetorical situation, and from that, articulate theories."

## Presidential Rhetoric as a Site for Study

Presidential rhetoric provides an important and useful branch of rhetorical criticism. Edwards (2009, p. 457) argues that, "The president is the most important political actor within American politics… He is the proverbial sun of America's political universe," and "the importance of the presidency becomes even greater in the realm of foreign affairs" because of the President's Constitutional mandate to serve as commander in chief and his power to commit huge resources for foreign endeavors. One cannot underestimate the importance of the words of the President. While many study the Presidency, rhetorical critics engage their subject based on a particular respect for and awareness of language. As Beasley (2010) notes while summarizing the insights of Zarefsky, those who conceptualize public policy issues as rhetorical focus on the creation and use of symbols that are employed to perceive, define, address, and resolve major issues. Reflecting the diversity in the field as a whole, varied approaches exist for the study of Presidential rhetoric. In the current cases under consideration, I began my investigation by using the traditional tools of the Neo-Aristotelian critic but soon moved on to consider forms of rhetoric more closely connected to second modernity, specifically, the resources of phronesis, or practical logic, such as metaphor and narrative. As Lewis (1987) notes in his seminal narrative analysis of Reagan's speeches, using methods such as these may better explain the success and rhetorical prowess of President in the current era than more traditional methods because

President's no longer succeed based on their logic alone, but also because of their use of the tools of phronesis.

## Obama as Rhetor

Some rhetoricians and scholars have already investigated and analyzed the rhetoric of Obama. The President first gained the attention of rhetoricians because of his key note address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Frank, in his collaboration with McPhail, (2005) finds in Obama's rhetoric a recognition of the disparate traumas that groups in American society had experienced and an ability to use language to overcome those traumas to increase identification and connection among members of the public. Similarly, Rowland and Jones (2007) discovered that Obama created a story of the American dream in this speech, one in which Americans were asked to recognize not only dreams of economic success and happiness but also that a level playing field was needed so that all Americans could possess the potential to succeed. As a young Senator from Illinois, Obama drew attention not only from the American public, but also from the communication community who recognized that Obama had an ability to rhetorically influence the identities of his audience members and used tools, including narrative, to do so.

Obama's speeches next generated interest during the 2008 Presidential campaign. Ivie and Giner (2009) discovered that the idea of Americanism reappeared in Obama's rhetoric at this time. They uncovered that Obama was able to convince the American people to support change, and his election as President, by tying the idea of American exceptionalism, the concept that America is a special nation and different from all others, not to national chauvinism but to principles of democracy; Obama said we were special not

because we conquered all but because we embraced democracy. Again, Obama emphasized connection in these speeches, arguing that Americans were interdependent with each other. Ivie and Giner (2008) have also remarked on Obama's unique interpretation of American exceptionalism in their study of national security during the 2008 Presidential campaign. They recognize that Obama articulated a foreign policy that, while still recognizing the special status of the United States, tied America's unique nature to democratic principles. Specifically, Obama crafted a narrative that focused on global collaboration for democratic peace. Conley (2008, p. 310) concluded that Obama, unlike all of the other candidates, created a new option for the American people in the 2008 election, one that was based, "the tingling sensation of expanded political space and democratic vitality." During his Presidential campaign, scholars noticed in Obama's rhetoric a special interest in the malleability of American identity, as seen in Isakesen's (2011) study of how Obama's rhetoric on African American has changed and in Sweet and McCue-Enser's (2011) research on how Obama redefined the identity of American voters in the 2008 to center on agency.

Scholars have continued to notice similar elements in Obama's rhetoric as President. Given their recency, many of Obama's accomplishments and challenges as President have yet to be fully analyzed. However, a growing body of work is developing on this subject. For example, Patterson (2011) finds that Obama may not only be empowered by narrative, narrative may also constrain his Presidency. In particular, Patterson (2011) argues that narratives circulating in American culture connected Obama to a racialized history that marked Obama as an outsider, something that Patterson (2011) believes limited the President's options and prevented him from fully responding to the issues raised by the

"Beer Summit" controversy. Similarly, Enck-Wanzer (2011) argues that prior American discourses related to race limited Obama's ability to respond to the Tea Party movement, and were used by members of the Tea Party to mark Obama as a racial outsider, to the President's detriment. Yet, on a more optimistic note, Sweet and McCue-Enser (2011), in their study of Obama's election discourse, see narrative as flexible and open to change. They contend that Obama has created a more flexible construction of American identity, one that recognizes that American citizens possess the potential for change and improvement. Scholars recognize that Obama faced a difficult and challenging landscape upon his election to office. Some, often those who focused on race, saw this landscape as something that limited Obama. Others, often those who focused on American identity more broadly, saw in Obama the potential to modify his environment and change this discourse. The lesson to be drawn from these studies is that the narratives of second modernity may both constrain and empower rhetors.

## Second Modernity

Earlier, I introduced the concept of second modernity; a more robust discussion of this idea is now warranted. Beck (1992) contends that the current era we live in is not postmodern, but rather second modern, for our current society is the result not so much of an end to modernity but a sign of its success and continuation in a modified form. Urry (2004) explains that Beck recognizes two forms of modernity in the recent history of the West. The first, earlier, modernity was focused on the nation state. In second modernity, Beck sees the connection between the nation state and society as broken. The foundations of first modernity, such as the family, career, and life history, can no longer be taken for granted. However, it should be emphasized that Beck does not recognize a transition to

post-modernity occurring; we are not engaged in a shift from the modern to its opposite but rather to a new form of modernity. In other words, the family, career, and life history are not being replaced by no family, no career, and no life history but instead are changing to different forms of family, career, and life history. As Beck and Lau (2005) elaborate, there has not been a break with the principles of modernity, but rather a transformation of the basic institutions of modernity. Beck and Lau (2005, p. 526), explain that, "the very idea of controllability, certainty or security – so fundamental to first modernity – collapses" but that this does not entail the end of society. The success of first modernity has paved the way for second modernity, a continuation of modernity in a new form.

**Reflexivity**

A key component of Beck's conceptualization of second modernity is the principle of reflexivity. Beck and Willms (2004, p. 29) explain that "modernity has begun to modernize its own foundations. This is what it means to say modernity has become reflexive. It has become directed at itself." The society of first modernity was built upon many non-modern traditions and these foundations are in the process of transformation. The result is that modernity "disenchants and dissolves its own taken for granted premises." For example, in first modernity, we believed that science would provide the answers to all of our questions. In second modernity, we have come to recognize that scientific knowledge is itself uncertain. Science has advanced so quickly and so rapidly that the truths of yesterday become the fictions of today, prompting a worldview in which truth and objectivity become ephemeral. Aspects of the nation-state such as welfare, the legal system, the national economy, and democracy can no longer be taken for granted. Likewise, social institutions such as the family and the career are no longer certain. Second

modernity is in an open process of change and, unlike first modernity, not only is society in the process of change but so is the method of change, leading Beck to label this a "meta-change." Unlike fellow sociologist Anthony Giddens, Beck sees self-reflection as only one component of reflexive modernization; Beck draws greater attention to the unintended, unconsidered, and unconscious consequences of modernization and its iterative nature. As Beck (1998, p.132) writes, for him, reflexivity refers to the "unintentional, often unseen, calling into question, changing and cancellation of modernization itself."

**Uncertainty and Agency**

Beck and Lau (2005) note that reflexive modernity has increased uncertainty in the world. The traditional means for reaching decisions, such as scientific rationalism, have been called into question as the process of modernization has begun to challenge and transform its own foundations. Mythen (2004) explains that the certainty previously associated with stable institutions disappears. Institutions and governments are rescinding their power to decide, leading to devolution; individuals are constantly required to make decisions and now must take greater responsibility for their choices and actions. A reduction in certainty is correlated with an increase in individual agency. Beck (1992) contends that one of the key traits of second modernity is risk. Modern risks are often irreversible, generally remain invisible, and, as a result, are open to social definition and construction. Because governments can no longer effectively handle risks, the need to manage risks is defused across society. What was once the responsibility of government becomes a personal responsibility, leading to agency.

Yet, the world offers individuals few obvious or clear choices. Beck and Lau (2005) continue by arguing that in first modernity, the world was governed by either/or principles.

For example, there was either knowledge or not knowledge. There was either nature or society. There was either war or peace. In contrast, reflexive modernity is based on the both/and principle. There is both knowledge and not knowledge. There is both nature and society. There is both war and peace. As a result, the process of reaching a decision becomes much more problematic, for ones knowledge of the world is no longer stable and the boundaries between older concepts such as war and peace become blurred. The lack of certainty challenges the logocentrism and objectivity associated with Neo-Aristotelian analysis and calls for different tools.

## Phronesis for Second Modernity

I find that the proper response to second modernity is for scholars to adopt the methods and insights that best reflect this new condition. Based on the insights of Beck, I believe that we currently live in second modernity, not postmodernity; the methods I associate with phronesis, practical wisdom, provide a powerful set of resources for understanding this new world. For me, these are the tools of practical wisdom, metaphor and narrative, which recognize an end to the stability associated with first modernity, but continue its traditions and optimism in modified form.[1] While uncertain, second moderns continue to live a distinctly modern life. As a result, morality, truth, and reason remain, but must be established through different means.

The downfall of Neo-Aristotelianism demonstrates the need for phronesis. Rather than rejecting modernity, phronesis allows one to study second modernity in new ways that do not require the certainty of Neo-Aristotelianism but at the same time avoid the potential

[1] Metaphor and narrative are not the only likely forms of practical wisdom suitable for second modernity, they serve as guides for the case studies I conducted; other artifacts will likely warrant different approaches. For example, the study of rhetorical style might prove a useful tool for the study of second modernity.

nihilism of post-modernity. As quoted in Fisher (1984, p. 348), Bernstein proclaims, "With chilling clarity, Descartes leaves us with an apparent and ineluctable necessity to a grand and seductive Either/Or. *Either* there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, *or* we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelope us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos." As Fisher (1984, p. 348) continues, tools such as narrative offer us "a place beyond this," and indeed, we currently live in a place beyond both first modernity and postmodernity. It is the world of second modernity, one in which metaphor and narrative take on a new importance because the tools of first modernity are no longer enough to guarantee success. As Beck and Lau (2005) note, second modernity is no longer based on the binaries of Descartes; as exemplified in Fisher's work on narrative, phronesis provides the tools to escape these binaries. Each essay in this collection serves as a case study that recognizes the utility of a return from the edges of postmodernity and a selection of theoretical approaches best attuned to the conditions of continued modernity.

**Constitutive Rhetoric for Second Modern Identities**

Second, the insights of Beck direct scholars to consider the importance and significance of identity. The concept of second modernity does not represent a complete break with modernity; likewise, it does not represent a complete break with postmodern theory. In particular, postmodern scholars such as Butler have recognized the changeable and fragmentary nature of identity. So too, do scholars of second modernity recognize that identity, like all forms of knowledge, is something that is open to change and never stable. Identity is unstable, and the identities that are constructed in second modernity are based on agency, the freedom to manage ones own risks and construct an identity for oneself or for others.

This interest in identity and meaning may best be addressed in the field of communication through an awareness of constitutive rhetoric and its use to study the manner in which meaning is created. McGee (1975) explains that the identity of a group of individuals is constantly in flux, an argument that resonates with the principles of second modernity. For McGee, collective identity is not something that objectively exists before rhetoric but is instead created through rhetoric. As McGee (1975, p. 242) notes, "'the people' are more process than phenomenon. That is, they are conjured in to objective reality, remain so long as the rhetoric which defined them has force, and in the end, wilt away." Basing his work on Althusser, Charland (1987) continues McGee's postmodern discussion and finds that rhetoricians may interpellate, or hail members of an audience. When audiences take on or accept a particular, rhetorically constructed identity, that decision has ideological or persuasive power. Accepting an identity prompts one to accept the goals, visions, and duties associated with that identity. The uncertain, changing, and unknown identities of second modernity closely correlate with the tenets of constitutive rhetoric.

In particular, scholars have recognized a growing trend for rhetors to imbue members of their audience with agency. For example, Charland (1987) found in documents related to the Quebecquois independence movement that the Quebecquois people were presented as agents who had the ability to act freely in the world. Yet, this rhetoric also constrained the identity of audience members by signaling how they should use their agency; in this case, accepting Quebecquois identity entailed accepting the goal of an independent Quebec. In other words, because you are, you must. More recently, Zagacki (2007) has found a similar dimension in George W. Bush's approach to the people

of Iraq. Similar to Charland's (1987) insights, Zagacki (2007) contends that Bush attempted to create an identity for Iraqis based on agency. Yet, this identity was even more constrained than that discovered by Charland. Zagacki (2007, p. 285) notes, "he created a paradoxical relationship in which the supposedly freed and yet occupied people of Iraq could only meet the demands of democracy and freedom by acting almost entirely as he and other coalition 'liberators' said they should." Prior research recognizes the importance of agency in constitutive rhetoric. It is no coincidence that the tools of phronesis also correlate with constitutive identity. Indeed, Charland (1987, p. 138) describes the "'peuple' as narrative ideological effect" and goes on to contend that "narratives 'make real' coherent subjects." Likewise, in his analysis of Lincoln's speeches, Gross (2004) finds that metaphors may be used to constitute identity, for each metaphor has the possibility to name, define, and frame a social or political problem in a unique manner. Phronesis and constitutive rhetoric are complementary approaches to the study of the rhetoric of second modernity because rhetors use the resources of phronesis in order to construct identities for audience members.

## Organizational Preview

Thus far, I have introduced the principles of rhetorical criticism and their connection to Presidential rhetoric and Obama's speeches in particular. I also have explored the concept of second modernity and its relationship with phronesis and constitutive rhetoric. In what follows, I analyze three of Obama's key foreign policy speeches. Specifically, I present my Neo-Aristotelian analysis of Obama's "Cairo Speech," in which he attempted to break with the policies of his predecessor George W. Bush and establish a new relationship with the people of the Middle East. Next, I investigate

Obama's use of metaphor in his "Prague Speech," where the President argued for global nuclear arms reductions. Finally, I consider Obama's speeches on Libya, in which he created a new narrative and new identities for America and the Middle East. I finally develop conclusions based on my analysis of the three cases and explain the lessons I have learned at NDSU. These cases highlight the importance of Obama as a rhetor of second modernity and illustrate the key tenets of this theory.

## SECTION TWO: "A NEW BEGINNING" FOR THE MIDDLE EAST:A NEW BEGINNING FOR NEO-ARISTOTELIANISM?


### Abstract

In this section I analyze Barack Obama's first major speech on American foreign policy toward the Middle East, his "New Beginning Speech," also referred to as his "Cairo Speech." I examine this speech using the methods of Neo-Aristotelian criticism and Terrill's (2009) insights about the dual perspective Obama possesses, which allows him to view the world both from his personal standpoint and from the perspective of others. I find that the dual identity first noticed by Terrill (2009) is witnessed in Obama's style and, in particular, his use of parallelism and argue for the continued relevance and utility of Neo-Aristotelian approaches to criticism. Obama used all of the available resources at his disposal in order to persuade members of his audience to adopt a peaceful stance.


### Introduction

It's all in a name. As McKerrow (1989) writes, naming is a central attribute of rhetoric and an interpretative act. While McKerrow utilized this argument to advocate for a new approach to rhetoric, his insight has application at a more basic level; names create political and rhetorical constraints and possibilities. Perhaps no modern rhetor knows this better than American President Barack Hussein Obama, whose middle name led to great controversy during the 2008 American Presidential election. During this race, some attempted to use Obama's middle name to attack him, leading Weir (2008) to quip, "Depending on who you are and how you say it, Obama's middle name amounts to a mild slur." Yet, this name became an argumentative claim for communion after Obama won the Presidency and began his attempt to persuade the global Muslim community to embrace

the United States and reject terrorism. What was once a potential weakness became a strength, as Obama's name allowed him to identify, however briefly, with members of his Muslim audience.

Indeed, in his first major address on Muslim relations with the United States, Obama's aptly titled "On a New Beginning" speech, delivered in Cairo, Egypt, in 2009, Obama used all of the rhetorical resources at his disposal, including his name, to persuade an international, Muslim, audience that the United States wished for peace, not war. While Obama's prominence as a rhetor is recent, it has already been recognized. Frank (2009) sees Obama as following in the footsteps of Martin Luther King, Jr., according to Frank (2009) Wills views Obama as continuing the tradition of Abraham Lincoln, and, according to Frank, Craig said Obama was "a new Black Moses" at the 2008 Rhetoric Society of America Conference (2009, p. 168-169). Most applicable for the analysis that follows, Terrill (2009) finds within the rhetoric of Obama a doubled consciousness and doubled perspective, in which Obama viewed the world through his own eyes, but also saw himself through the eyes of others. Obama was able to take on not only his own perspective, but that of his audience members. Inspired by Terrill, in this essay I examine Obama's "On a New Beginning" speech, also known as the "Cairo Speech" and use Neo-Aristotelian methods of analysis to examine the full argumentative force of this speech, including its dualism, in order to answer the fundamental question of Neo-Aristotelian analysis and determine if Obama used the available means of persuasion to evoke reconciliation and cooperation with the Muslim world. In order to do so, I explore the context of Obama's speech and the tenets of Neo-Aristotelian criticism before finally sharing my findings.

## Obama and the Current Context

Obama, as the forty-fourth President of the United States, was not speaking in Cairo as a mere individual but as the leader of the American people. Yet, his life story was relevant for his rhetoric. Obama has not only a Muslim inspired name, but a Muslim past, for he is quite literally a child of Islam. The President was born to a Muslim father, and, according to Wolfe (2009), received his middle name in honor of his grandfather's last name, "Hussein." Likewise, Obama (2006), in one of his autobiographies, revealed that as a child, he resided in Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim nation, for four of his most formative years, ages six to ten. More so than any other President, Obama has a personal history with Islam.

These background traits, and a multi-racial, global, identity that no other American President ever possessed, allowed Obama to create commonality in Cairo. Throughout his speech, Obama (2009) drew attention to the Muslim background of his immediate audience sitting at Cairo University by stating that they symbolized the harmony between tradition and progress represented by Islam. In addition to those seated in the auditorium, Obama also spoke to a global audience via the mass media. According to the White House (2009), the "Cairo Speech" was translated and captioned into at least fourteen tongues including Arabic, Indonesian, Persian, Punjabi, and Urdu, all languages predominantly spoken by Muslims. Furthermore, Obama delivered his speech in Egypt, a nation that, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2009), is 94% Muslim. At the time of the speech, Egypt was known for its willingness to negotiate with nations of different faiths on issues related to the Middle East. Most notably, the Jimmy Carter Library (2001) documents that Egypt was the first Middle Eastern nation to make peace with Israel in the

late 1970s as part of the Camp David Accords President Carter led. Obama's Muslim past provided a resource for the President to identify with his predominantly Muslim audience members.

Furthermore, Obama presented this speech in response to what Bitzer (1968) defines as a rhetorical situation, a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an exigence, an imperfection marked by urgency, that can be partially or completely modified by discourse. In this case, the exigence Obama responded to was particularly enduring and challenging: the threat of continued terrorist attacks against the United States. While not a Neo-Aristotelian, McKerrow's (1989) general insights on rhetoric are again useful, for he directs the rhetorician to another key feature of context, that absence is as significant as presence. In this case, what was absent from this rhetorical situation was an immediate attack or recent catastrophe. As of June 4, 2009, the day of Obama's speech, terrorists had not attacked American territory since September 11. The context provided by Obama's personal history, the nature of Obama's audience, and the continued threat of terrorism shaped Obama's speech.

**The Neo-Aristotelian Approach**

In this examination, I employ the methods of Neo-Aristotelian analysis. As Burgchardt (2005) explains, this method is focused on persuasive speech and its effect on an immediate audience. It has a long and contentious history; Neo-Aristotelian analysis served as the dominant approach used by rhetorical critics from 1925 until the 1960s, when it fell into disfavor. However, this technique still provides much of the historical foundation for modern criticism. As Black (1978) notes, from the Neo-Aristotelianism perspective, the background and history of the rhetor influence his or his discourse, which

then influences an audience. Context plays a key role in Neo-Aristotelian criticism, to the extent that Ehniger (1965) claims it takes precedent over content. Balancing these definitions, Hill (2009) informs the reader what Neo-Aristotelian analysis is not. It is not an assessment of the speaker's choice of target audiences. It is not a prediction whether a policy will remain historically viable. It is not an examination of the truth of a speaker's statements or the speaker's values. Instead, Neo-Aristotelian is best conceptualized as a form of analysis that focuses on the persuasive impact of a message.

## The Success of Obama

Based on this understanding of Neo-Aristotelian theory, an application of these principles to Obama's speech is warranted. Obama (2009) relied on several sources of invention in this speech, most notably the Koran, which is cited seven times, more than any other document. Other resources included stories of early American Presidents, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, who reached out to the Muslim world, and stories about historical acts of cooperation between Americans and Muslims. For example, Obama (2009) stated that Muslim Morocco was the first to recognize the United States as an independent nation. By doing so, Obama suggested that he knew, respected, and valued the Muslim canon, which helped him connect with his audience. Yet, what matters most in this speech is how Obama used these resources, for, as Wichelns (1925) notes, the key elements of the Neo-Aristotelian approach, in addition to context, are invention: logos, paths and ethos; the structure of the speech; style; memory; and delivery. It is toward these dimensions that this essay now turns.

**Invention: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos**

Obama's speech relied on three broad logical strategies to persuade his audience: merismus, paromologia, and procatalepsis. First, Obama repeatedly engaged in acts of merismus, or division, in order to create a disconnect between the majority of Muslims, who Obama said were peaceful and wished to live in harmony with the global community, and the minority of Muslims who Obama said were warlike and wished to live in conflict with the global community. Perelman (1969) would recognize this as a dissociation between reality and appearance, for Obama claimed that in reality Islam was a peaceful religion, and terrorists only appeared to fight for the Muslim world. For example, Obama (2009, para. 2) stated, "Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims" and he continued, "they have killed people of different faiths-but more than any other they have killed Muslims," suggesting that since terrorists have primarily killed Muslims, they cannot truly represent the Muslim community. Obama (2009) repeated the words "extremist" and "extremism" eleven times throughout the speech to reinforce his claim. Through his use of language and by drawing attention to losses in the Muslim community at the hands of Muslim "extremists" Obama successfully created a peace/violence merismus.

Obama's next major argumentative strategy was to engage in paromologia, admitting weaker points in order to make stronger arguments. This played a key role, as one of the major goals of this speech was to create "A New Beginning" with the Muslim world and distinguish his Presidency from that of his predecessor, George W. Bush. Significantly, Obama (2009) admitted that the decision to invade Iraq was not necessary, stating, "Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice." Yet, notice this was done to justify

the war in Afghanistan, which Obama defined, through comparison, as a war of necessity; he admitted the weaker point of Bush's error to justify his own policy decision to continue the war in Afghanistan. Likewise, Obama (2009, para. 43) recognized that during the Cold War, "the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government," but, according to Obama what matters now is the future of Iran and nuclear proliferation. In the next paragraph, Obama (2009, para. 44) stated, "But it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It's about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East." He continued by admitting that the freedom of Muslim women had been suppressed by some Western nations that prohibited Muslim dress, but, in the same sentence, used this to argue that Muslims must work against other forms of oppression in their own nations, and provide all women with an equal education. By employing the technique of paromologia, Obama was better able to argue for a "new," more cooperative future by recognizing past Western errors.

Finally, the President engaged in procatelepsis, or anticipating and then refuting objections, a technique Hill (2004) also uncovered while examining Richard Nixon's November 3, 1969 speech from the perspective of Neo-Aristotelian criticism. Obama countered objections that America wished to expand its empire to the Middle East. He emphasized (2009, para. 22, 26), "Now, make no mistake: We do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan. We see no military-- we seek no military bases there... I have made it clear to the Iraqi people that we pursue no bases, and no claim on their territory or resources. Iraq's sovereignty is their own." Furthermore, when discussing democracy, Obama anticipated that members of his audience might see "democracy" as a trope that

metonymically represented imperialism. Obama (2009, para. 47) countered this by stating, "No system of government can or should be imposed by any other.... America does not presume to know what is best for everyone." Procatelepsis encouraged reconciliation while also enumerating Obama's goals for the region.

Throughout this speech, Obama repeatedly made pathos based appeals targeted at his audience's emotions. Obama ingratiated himself with the Muslim community through appeals to emotions of pride and honor throughout the speech. For example, Obama (2009, para. 8) stated that he "knows civilization's debt to Islam" and noted that the Muslim world paved the way for the European Renaissance and Enlightenment, developed algebra, the magnetic compass, pens and printing, learned how disease spreads," and that "throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality." Obama encouraged his audience to be favorably disposed to his speech and warmed by his rhetoric by appealing to their pride.

Likewise, Obama used emotions connected to tragedy and sorrow to touch listeners. For example, four times, Obama (2009) employed the word "innocent" to tell of the "innocents" slaughtered in Bosnia and Darfur, "innocents" killed by extremists, "innocents" killed on 9/11, and proclaimed that the "Holy Koran" forbids killing "innocents." Acts of descriptio increased the feeling of loss and wrong throughout the speech. At one point, Obama described the consequences of 9/11:

> The victims were innocent men, women, and children from America and many other nations who had done nothing to harm anybody. And yet al Qaeda chose to ruthlessly murder these people, claimed credit for the attack, and even now states their determination to kill on a massive scale (2009, para. 21).

This emotional rhetoric slowly transformed to one of hope; for the pain of the past may lead to prosperity in the future. Toward the end of his speech, the President (2009, para. 66) explained that through cooperation in education and economic development we will "develop new sources of energy, create green jobs, digitize records, clean water, grow new crops," and "promote child and maternal health." These emotional appeals helped persuade his audience, for it is difficult to support the killing of "innocents," especially when the audience is asked to envision the pleasures of prosperity and cooperation that will result if they reject killing.

Next, ethos played a particularly strong role in this speech. Throughout, Obama used his name and personal history to build rapport and credibility with his audience. Obama (2009, para. 11) announced, "Now much has been made of the fact that an African American with the name Barack Hussein Obama could be elected President," a comment that led to immediate applause. Obama (2009, para. 6) stated that he is a Christian, but that his father "came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims" and then spoke of his experience growing up as a child in predominantly Muslim Indonesia, using a word unfamiliar to most Americans, "As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the azaan[2] at the break of dawn and the fall of dusk." Obama referenced his Muslim heritage to build creditability with his audience. Obama remained a modest man throughout this speech. Echoing Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address, Obama (2009, para.5) revealed that he was "humbled by the task before us," and that "no single speech can eradicate years of mistrust." He (2009, para. 15) reiterated this later in the speech and claimed, "Words alone cannot meet the needs of our people. These needs will be met only

[2] The azaan is the Muslim call to prayer.

if we act boldly in the years ahead." Through this language, Obama suggested that he was more a part of the Muslim world than his predecessor and that he was willing to listen, as well as instruct.

**Arrangement**

The speech was divided into nine distinct parts: an introduction in which Obama thanked his audience and recognized the accomplishments of Islam, followed by seven numbered issues that Obama (2009, para. 17) said "we must finally confront together:" violent extremism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nuclear weapons in Iran, democracy, religious freedom, women's rights, and economic development and opportunity. Obama then closed the speech by reiterating the theme of commonality introduced at the start of his speech. The speech was arranged in order of importance; topics at the beginning received more coverage than those at the end, with the exception that Obama's last new topic, economic development and opportunity, received more time than topics three through six. Overall, this arrangement was successful, and logically divided Obama's topics, but not his argumentative strategies, which appeared repeatedly throughout the speech. Audience reaction suggested that those in attendance at Cairo University believed one topic was more important than Obama perceived— democracy. At 374 words, this was one of the shortest subjects Obama addressed in the speech. Despite the small amount of time spent on democracy, Obama was thrice applauded for his ideas. Moreover, the section on democracy was the only occasion a member of the audience interrupted Obama's speech. As seen in the transcript (Obama, 2009, paras. 50-51) and heard in the audio recording, immediately after Obama stated, "elections alone do not make true democracy," an audience member yelled "Barack Obama, we love you," leading Obama to pause his

speech and respond with a "Thank you." Given the audience response, Obama would have been well-advised to spend more time on the topic of democracy.

**Style**

Obama continued to demonstrate his agility as a speaker in this speech. His sentences are direct and free from unnecessary ornamental devices that might detract from the serious tone of the subject, a trait of Obama's style that Markowitz (2008) also noticed. However, a stylistic device, parallelism becomes apparent in this speech, and was used for two distinct purposes. First, the content of Obama's speech was marked by parallelism between the United States and the Muslim world. As noted at the start of this essay, Terrill (2009) has found in the prior speeches of Obama a dual perspective, in which Obama saw himself both through his own eyes and those of outsiders. Perhaps because of the awareness this dual perspective offered, Obama did not seek to create a form of consubstantiality with the Muslim world in which Muslim values and culture were supplanted by American culture, a wise decision, as those outside the West often associate such tactics with imperialism. Instead, Obama stylistically created a parallel path for global Muslims and the United States, one where the same goal was pursued through different means. Obama (2009, paras. 6, 26) noted that "there must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to respect common ground," and that America will support Iraq "as a partner, never as a patron." Such style reinforced the idea that the United States did not desire to imperially govern the Middle East but instead desired to support the people of the Middle East as they traveled on their own parallel path to democracy.

Parallelism also accomplished a second, distinct goal for Obama; it stylistically reinforced Obama's merismus between the majority of peaceful Muslims and the minority who engaged in violence. The President (2009, para. 4) proclaimed that moderate Islam and America must not "empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, those who promote conflict rather than the cooperation needed," for "this partnership must be based on what Islam is, not what it isn't." Obama (2009, para. 23) continued by using parallel paraphrases from the Koran to support this idea, "The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent is as-- it is as if he has killed all mankind. And the Holy Koran also says whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind;" the audience appeal of these statements is demonstrated by the prolonged applause they prompted. Through parallelism, Obama stylistically reinforced his rhetorical divide between the peaceful majority and the violent minority, a crucial component of his argument.

**Memory**

Next, it is necessary to address memory, the oft forgotten and overlooked canon of rhetoric. In this speech, Obama appeared completely memorized and the video recording of his presentation revealed no Teleprompters. If Teleprompters were present, Obama used them so minimally that I could not even guess where they were located, for, throughout the speech, Obama made eye contact across the room. No notes appeared on the podium, and Obama never looked down. Likewise, Obama stumbled only once in this fifty-five minute speech and it was barely noticeable. A solid grasp of memory appears part of Obama's character as a speaker, and likely increased his ethos at this time, a significant contrast from his predecessor, George W. Bush who, as reported by Kurtzman (2010), made so

many verbal gaffs that the word "Bushism," was invented to describe them. Obama's speech was memorized, which created the foundation for successful delivery.

**Delivery**

Obama (2009) spoke in a loud, confident voice throughout his presentation. He spoke with authority, and made ample use of pauses to allow his thoughts to be processed by the audience. His voice was clear and was adapted to the subjects he addressed during various portions of his speech. By using plain language and a direct tone, Obama increased his ethos, and he complimented this with somber facial expressions, for even when receiving massive applause, Obama did not smile or deviate from his serious tone. A gesture repeated throughout Obama's speech— the pointed finger. Makiewicz (2006) reveals that Bill Clinton became known for his thumbs up gesture. Obama may well become known for his point. Throughout this speech, Obama got his "point" across by pointing, perhaps most effectively doing so when discussing the status of Israel and Palestine, at which time he pointed in two different directions, one for Israel, and one for Palestine. The gestures were at the same height, and were made in parallel fashion, suggesting that the hardship experienced by Jewish people during World War II was similar to that faced by Palestinians today. Finally, accent played a key role in Obama's delivery. Throughout the speech, Obama incorporated many words and phrases that originated in Arabic. He spoke these words with an Arabic, not a Chicago accent. For example, in this speech, the word "Muslim" does not repeat the "u" in "tug," as it does in Chicago, but the more proper "oo" in Moose. Likewise, the "Koran" sounds more like the "Koron" than the "Ko-ran" that is pronounced in Chicago. By delivering these words with

an Arabic pronunciation, Obama further ingratiated himself with his audience, and suggested that while he is not Muslim, he is his grandfather's son.

**Reactions from the Audience**

Obama's speech was not only a moving and powerful exercise in rhetoric; it also helped the President accomplish his objectives. Obama's target audience was composed of individuals listening to his speech in Cairo and the global Muslim community. In terms of the immediate audience, the speech was an unqualified success. Obama (2009) received applause 42 times during this speech, almost once per minute, more if the time dedicated for applause is subtracted from his total speech time; at one point an audience member shouted out, "Barack Obama, we love you." The next day, Parsons (2009) reported that a boy in Cairo was noticed softly chanting, "Obama quoted the Koran. Obama quoted the Koran." Locally, Obama's speech was a hit.

In terms of the global audience, the reaction was positive, but less jubilant. A writer for Al Jazeera (2009), the region's most dominant and popular media outlet, described the reaction as "positive" and stated the speech helped ameliorate "the harm done by the Bush administration." Likewise, Lodhi (2009), in the *Khaleej Times* of the United Arab Emirates referred to the speech as a "compelling case," and argued that it was not "little more than a public relationing [sic] exercise," and reported that "the vision he set out, of charting a cooperative course on shared challenges marks a sharp departure from the with-us-or against-us paradigm of his predecessor." Likewise, the Yemeni reporters' bureau SABA (2009) stated that the Yemeni government welcomed the speech and described it as a "positive change in the American stance."

However, such responses were often qualified and journalists informed readers that not everyone supported Obama's speech. For example, Al Jazeera's (2009) reported that Iranian and Hamas leaders found fault with Obama's words. Before proceeding further, it is useful to note that Obama was not speaking to all Muslims, but rather to the peaceful majority of Muslims; Muslims who supported violence served as rhetorical objects of condemnation and disassociation in the speech. Therefore, it should not be surprising that some Muslims, especially those Obama condemned with his words, found fault with the speech. The decision among mainstream press organizations in the Middle East to include the sentiments of these individuals and attempt to speak on their behalf suggests that Obama's merismus was not entirely and automatically successful. The Muslim press considered the viewpoints of those who supported violence, such as Iran's leaders, worthy of consideration and inclusion in their publications.

A secondary audience existed for this speech, those in the United States who listened via the mass media. Robinson (2009), a writer for the *Washington Post,* remarked on the power of Obama's ethos and stated, "Not being Bush was a big factor. But at least as important was being Obama," before going on to proclaim, "Obama was speaking the language of Islam in a tone of respect. What a concept." Beach, in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal,* also recognized the President's successful use of language:

> Mr. Obama showed people who normally shout at each other how to talk to each other. If he can truly get people to do this, we could actually achieve Middle East peace, or something close to it. Showing people how to have a civil discourse could be Mr. Obama's biggest contribution to the world stage (2009).

Furthermore, while stating the speech "was perhaps the riskiest of his career," Zeleny and Cooper (2009) in the *New York Times* concluded that it succeeded based on its "empathetic tone toward the Palestinians," that Obama "seemed to connect with his audience," and sounded "forceful." The long term perception of this speech was more varied; for example, an Al Jazeera reporter, Bayoumi (2010) later claimed that the speech's effects were "undone" because of continued American support for Israel. But, one must remember Hill's (2005) admonition that the Neo-Aristotelian approach does not predict or evaluate if a policy will remain historically viable; long term effects on policy should remain outside of the critic's consideration because the focus of a critic should be on the speech's impact on an immediate audience, rather than a timeless audience. Based on commentary immediately after its presentation, Obama's "Cairo Speech" must be deemed a success.

**The Value of the Neo-Aristotelian Approach**

Overall, this examination suggests the enduring legacy and utility of the Neo-Aristotelian method of criticism. This form of analysis helped reveal Obama's argumentative techniques in his speech, and connected them with Terrill's (2009) more post-Aristotelian focus on Obama's dual identity through an examination of Obama's parallel structure. Neo-Aristotelianism reminds critics of the connection between style and logic and suggests how ones style may persuade an audience. Through Neo-Aristotelianism, one comes to uncover argumentative strategies and connections that might be lost in other approaches. Likewise, this application suggests the usefulness of the Neo-Aristotelian method for educational purposes, perhaps a result of what Foss (2004) sees as the method's historic relationship with education. The focus of the Neo-Aristotelian approach on speeches and on methods of argument makes it ideally suited for introductory

classes; indeed, I have considered sharing Hill's (2004) piece with two debaters in one of my summer classes, as a useful guide for understanding and developing arguments. If I had to pick one method of criticism that was approachable, understandable, and useful for students, this would be it.[3]

The fundamental debate over the utility of the Neo-Aristotelian approach rests on a divide between modernity/objectivity and postmodernity/subjectivity. Existing at a time when the modern was coming into being, Wichelns' (1925) approach attempted to adopt a more scientific, rational and objective perspective for the study of speeches. According to Foss (2004), one of the weaknesses of this approach was that it "encouraged the mechanical application of categories to rhetoric." Yet, scientists attempt to view the world from a rationale perspective, and use repetitive, sometimes boring methods. No one questions the scientific method because it is too mundane or quotidian; indeed, these aspects are seen as its very strengths. Do we live in a postmodern world, a world in which knowledge is ultimately unknowable and lacking in logic? Sometimes. Other times, the objective nature of reality is far too obvious, as recalled in Obama's reference to the nearly 2,000 lives lost on September 11, 2001. No matter the number or the quantity, references to Foucault, Butler, or other postmodernists cannot successfully deny that those lives were lost. Likewise, not all speeches, not all artifacts, are grounded in the psyche or the absurd. Obama's "New Beginning" speech demonstrates that rationale discourse remains, and, at least at times, remains effective. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the Neo-Aristotelian approach, one noted by Foss (2004), is its reluctance to allow for a diversity of methods beyond its canon, forcing critics to ignore powerful psychological or nonrational appeals.

[3] Since writing this essay, I have developed a Neo-Aristotelian lecture and speech analysis activity for my Speech 101 students at Harper College and the College of DuPage.

Yet, this same ossification is revealed in critics who refuse to recognize the potential validity of argument centered Neo-Aristotelianism. Ultimately, it is the artifact that must guide analysis. If rhetors such as Obama continue to pursue logical, rationale claims, perhaps there shall be "a new beginning" for Neo-Aristotelianism.

## SECTION THREE: PRAGUE IS PEACE: METAPHOR IN BARACK OBAMA'S "PRAGUE SPEECH"


### Abstract

In this section, I study Obama's "Prague Speech," the President's major statement in support of nuclear arms reductions, through the lens of metaphorical criticism. Basing my research on the insights of Ivie (1987), I find that Obama was able to create a new metaphor that overcame the savagery/civilization binary that Ivie noticed in his analysis of the rhetoric of prior nuclear nonproliferation activists. I discover that Obama created a metaphor based on a journey to Prague, by way of a contractually constructed bridge, which recognized that all nations have the possibility to choose the path they walk. This bridge symbolized the division between past and present. Obama created agency for his audience members, for they had the power to choose peace or war.


### Introduction

Ivie (1987), in his analysis of Cold War Idealists, found that the inability of nuclear nonproliferation activists to transcend dominant metaphors led to their failure to promote nuclear disarmament. At the close of his article, Ivie (1987, p. 332) announced that the "time for rhetorical transcendence has arrived," but bemoaned the lack of a new, more fitting metaphor for nuclear war which emphasized unity and transcended the dichotomy between savagery and civilization he found in the rhetoric of the opponents of nuclear war. While it was unlikely that President Barack Obama read Ivie's article, Obama answered Ivie's question more than twenty years later in his 2009 "Prague Speech," where he proposed a worldwide nuclear arms reduction. In this speech, not only did Obama (2009,

para. 9) strive to "bridge" our divisions, he articulated a new policy for the Twenty-First Century designed to destroy one of the Twentieth Century's most tragic tools.

Weisman and Champion (2009, p. 1), reporters for the *Wall Street Journal,* revealed that "arms control groups hailed the speech as a breakthrough" and that European leaders were "delighted." Usborne (2009, p. 2), writing for the London *Independent,* compared Obama's speech to John F. Kennedy's famous "Ich bin ein Berliner speech," praised Obama's oratorical skill, and stated that it was clear the President "understood his audience." One year after the "Prague Speech," Obama signed a nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev. Haynes (2010) reported that as part of the treaty, the United States and Russia, which together held approximately 90% of the world's nuclear weapons, agreed to reduce their weapons by one third and their launchers by half over a seven year period. Stephens (2010, p. 9), in the London *Financial Times,* recognized the important effects of Obama's words and said the treaty signing and related events, "mark an important way station on a route he mapped during a speech in the Czech capital a year ago."

In order to best understand the "Prague Speech" and its persuasive power, it is necessary to investigate how Obama deployed metaphors in order to convince his audience that all nations must work toward the abandonment of nuclear weapons. Metaphor provides a useful tool for the examination of Obama's speech, for Ivie (1987) found that metaphors have dominated issues of nuclear war and peace for more than fifty years. Furthermore, the mere fact that Obama utilized metaphor in this speech is noteworthy, for Markowitz (2008) has found that Obama is a speaker not known for ornament. Indeed, I contend that Obama's use of metaphor was strategy, not mere style, and was designed to

provoke a desired response from his international audience: support for nuclear arms reduction.

Toward the goal of uncovering how Obama used metaphor to promote his cause, I first provide a context for this speech focused on both the rhetor and the situation. Next, I more fully explore the methodology of metaphor by examining studies that investigated the use of war metaphors and Obama's particular use of this device. I then introduce the reader to Obama's speech and analyze it, finding that the President created four connected metaphors, the journey, Prague, the bridge, and a contract. Finally, I conclude by emphasizing the importance of Obama's perceptual shift and his ability to avoid the savagery/civilization dichotomy, suggest why this metaphor arose at this particular time, and recommend future research focused on the connection between the metaphorical and the literal.

## The Context of the "Prague Speech"

I begin my investigation of the context for this speech by examining prior studies of Obama's speaking style and find that he has a unique ability to view and describe events from a dual perspective. Next, I discuss the setting of Prague and how this city's history of division and peaceful protest are important for understanding this speech. Finally, I explain that just hours before Obama's presentation on nuclear weapons, North Korea launched a missile in what most nations saw as a test toward the development of an illegal nuclear arsenal.

### The Obama Style

One of the most useful skills Obama possesses as speaker is his ability to unite contradictory elements. Frank (2009) recognizes this when he finds that Obama tended to

pair contradictory ideas, such as anger and hope, in his speeches. Terrill (2009) also uncovers a similar strategy and referred to it as a double consciousness; Obama rhetorically unites two contrasting ideas into a whole, but fails to resolve contradictions between them. For example, when handling the Robert Wright controversy, Obama did not contradict the negative account of Wright provided by the press, but instead introduced a second, more favorable perspective to the dialogue. Terrill (2009, p. 369) writes, "Obama absorbs all of them into himself without resolving their contradictions, presenting his own doubled body as a metonymy for the divided, yet whole, body politic." In the "Prague Speech" Obama did not deploy his own body as a metonymical device, but this rhetor's preference for an embodied dual perspective is revealed in his selection of rhetorical resources, specifically his Prague metaphor.

**A Spring Day in Prague**

Not only the speaker, but also the setting is significant for this speech. Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, is a city that has long straddled and signified the unity and division between Eastern and Western Europe. Wallace (1976) explains that since the initial migration of the peoples that would one day be named Czechs and Slovaks in the Fifth and Seventh Centuries, this locale has served as a juncture between the two Europes. These peoples alternately looked to the East and the Byzantine Church, or the West and the Roman Catholic Church, for guidance. Seton-Watson (1965) notes that by the Middle Ages, Prague was such a part of the West that Habsburg kings ruled the Austrian and the Holy Roman Empires from this city. But, by the Twentieth Century, Prague was such a part of the East that those in the West viewed Czechoslovakia as a Soviet puppet. After Tito led Yugoslavia out of the Soviet orbit in the late 1940s, the USSR isolated

Czechoslovakia from the West, prompting Szulc (1971, p. 79) to conclude that by 1949, Czechoslovakia could be properly labeled a "Soviet Satellite state." From its very origins, Prague and its surrounding lands embodied an alternating dichotomy between East and West.

Furthermore, Prague has a history of peaceful protest and tolerance for contradictory political perspectives. The people of Prague and the government of Czechoslovakia prominently challenged the authority of Moscow in what became known as the Prague Spring, a thaw in the Cold War that began in the spring of 1968 and emphasized a compromise between Capitalism and Communism. Szulc (1971, p. 311) reveals that this liberalization did not originate from violent protestors, but rather from the Communist leaders of Czechoslovakia who attempted to create "Socialism with a Human Face." At this time, even those outside of the Communist government, such as democratic activist and future Czech President Vaclav Havel (1991) argued that the goal was not to replace or destroy Communism, but to create space for a true opposition. Szulc (1971) explains that later that year, the USSR decided the Czechs and Slovaks had gone too far and repressed the liberalization movement through a massive invasion that restored unitary Communist control.

Almost twenty years later, Czechoslovakia began its movement away from the USSR; again, protests were marked by peace and multi-polarity. Kenney (2003) notes that there were several distinct groups that used different strategies to oppose the regime. A movement led by Havel and the revolutionaries of the Prague Spring focused on "civil society" as a form of dissent and the use of the legal system and underground press. Another form of opposition originated in the Roman Catholic Church and another came

from the counter-culture and rock music. Indeed, the Czechoslovakian process of independence came to be known as the Velvet Revolution because of its peaceful nature, predominantly because of the movement's non-violent relationship to the Communist government but also because of the non-competitive co-existence of rival schools of protest. Brown (2008) argues that this stance continued when Czechoslovakia split into the Czech and Slovak Republics; the division was again peaceful, causing it to be named the Velvet Divorce.

At the close of these revolutions, Prague and the Czech Republic partially returned to the Western sphere. Orenstein (2004, p. 61) explains that the nation initially began its reforms by adopting a policy that "accompanied radical stabilization and liberalization" with extensive "compensation measures designed to cushion the impact of reform." The nation alternated between and balanced Westernization with moderate socialism. The Czech Republic and its capital adopted peaceful tactics for social change, and when changing, preferred to blend the new with the old, rather than establish a sui generis regime.

**Nuclear Fallout from the (Other) East**

A recent event in the chronology of the Obama Presidency and the history of nuclear weapons occurred mere hours before the "Prague Speech." Salmon and Slavin (2009) report that North Korea launched a long range rocket over the Pacific Ocean. North Korean officials stated that this was only a satellite launch, but other nations, including the United States and key American allies South Korea and Japan, viewed it as a test of a long-range ballistic missile that could transport a nuclear weapon. According to Soh, Keyes, and Labott (2009), the launch forced an emergency meeting at the United Nations and led

Obama to respond to North Korea's actions in his speech. This event was not viewed as a strategic rhetorical resource but as a dilemma for the President. Former American diplomat to North Korea Jack Pritchard told reporters Shear and Lynch (2009, p. A1), "This really is a complication they wish they hadn't had." While North Korea announced more than a month earlier that it planned to conduct this type of test, its timing hardly appeared coincidental, for it was public knowledge that Obama would be talking about nuclear weapons on this day, prompting Obama (2009, para. 32) to refer to North Korea's actions as a "provocation." The President addressed not only a historic conflict with Communist states, but also a current exigence caused by North Korea.

## Metaphorical Criticism of War and Obama

Richards (1964, p. 89) quotes Aristotle as stating, "The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor," and metaphor has played a powerful role in international relations and American politics. In this section, I briefly discuss the study of metaphor in the fields of rhetoric. I explain how critics have used metaphor to study war, nuclear weapons, and the rhetoric of Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign.

### Introducing Metaphorical Criticism

Following Aristotle, Richards (1964, p. 90) emphasizes that metaphor is much more than "a sort of happy extra trick with words;" for Richards, it is an inherent and powerful component of language. He explains that there are two basic elements of metaphor: the tenor, the subject being addressed, and the vehicle, the figure the subject is associated with. Perhaps the two most prominent critics to follow Richard's path have been Osborn (1967) and Ivie (1987). Osborn's (1967) work provided early justification for the study of metaphor. He drew attention to the persuasive power of this resource, and explained that

the choice of metaphor expressed a potentially persuasive world view that could prompt value responses from an audience. Recognizing the utility of this resource, Ivie (1987) offered a strategy to best understand metaphor. The critic first familiarizes him or herself with the text(s), second repeatedly conducts close readings where vehicles are marked, third, places the marked vehicles into subgroups, fourth creates a separate file of vehicles and their contexts, and, finally, the concept files are analyzed one-by-one to uncover patterns of use. Metaphor criticism has a long history in the field of communication.

**Metaphors of War and Nuclear Weapons**

Metaphors have played a crucial role in the study of discourses associated with international relations and war. As Bates (2009) explains, metaphors, by definition, compare two dissimilar things; through this linkage, a rhetor may shift audience perceptions of an international event. According to Bates (2009, p. 451), metaphors become particularly powerful in war rhetoric, for "they become constitutive of reality" often leaving an audience with no choice but to support a war. Indeed, Zarefsky (2006) suggests that "war" may serve a metaphorical and persuasive purpose; and that the "war" metaphor allowed George W. Bush to generally prevent perceptions of the attacks on September 11, 2001, as accident or crime. Likewise, the use of metaphor shapes audience perceptions of the reasons for a war. For example, Stahl (2009) finds that metaphors such as "the yellow ribbon" can deflect attention from the political goals of a war and redirect them to tropes such as protecting the troops. The reality not only of a problem, but of a people, may be constructed through the use of metaphor. Rice (1996), in his study of the rhetoric of the Revolutionary War, borrows from the insights of McGee and adapted them for the field of metaphor. Rice (1996, p. 18) concludes, "Members of a society begin to

understand themselves through the metaphors employed by public figures." In other words, a people's self-concept and identity is shaped and constituted through the use of metaphor.

More specifically, scholars have studied the use of metaphor in discussions of nuclear weapons. Schiappa (1989) finds that dominant figures in the American government, such as Ronald Reagan, deployed "Nukespeak" which used various linguistic tools, including metaphor, to portray these weapons in a positive or neutral manner. Metaphors such as "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" created positive "domesticated" connotations for nuclear weapons. However, these rhetors found some ideas to be so unpleasant that they could not be made positive, and responded by neutralizing them through bureaucratic terms such as "collateral damage." To solve this, Schiappa (1989, p. 268) suggests the creation and use of terms and metaphors that "portray nuclear weapons as dangerous and immoral." Before, during, and after the time studied by Schiappa, rhetors were searching for just such metaphors. Ivie (1987, p.178) reveals that "game," "pathological," and "madness" metaphors all failed as alternatives to the dominant rhetoric. He concludes that these attempts were doomed because they "promoted a reversal, rather than transcendence, of the conventional image of a barbarian threat to civilization." When examining Obama's speech, I will consider if and how the President transcended this dichotomy.

**Obama's Metaphorical Journey**

In addition to the study of metaphors used in war, one scholar has examined the use of metaphor by Obama; Darsey (2009) analyzes Obama's use of metaphor in the 2008 Presidential election. While ornament may not play a large role in the Obama style, Darsey

concludes that metaphor has. Darsey (2009, p. 93) finds a dominant metaphor in Obama's linguistic repertoire, the journey, and argued it was "the controlling metaphor for his campaign." One of the reasons critics such as Rowland and Jones (2007, p. 430) offer to explain why Obama rose to prominence so quickly was his ability to capture the narrative of the American Dream, a metaphorical narrative that is based on the idea that Americans "are on a progressive journey to a better society." Darsey (2009) explains that the journey is characterized by purpose and, as Lakoff and Turner (1989, p. 3) note, "When we think of life as purposeful, we think of it having destinations and paths toward those destinations, which makes life a journey." When defining his Presidential campaign as a journey, Darsey (2009) finds that Obama suggested there were two paths that lay before the American people. They had the option and the agency to choose progress and elect the first African American President of the United States or the option of continuing their current trajectory. In order to reinforce this comparison, Obama integrated the story of his own journey with the journey of the American people, suggesting that his life paralleled their path.

**The "Prague Speech"**

Before delving into a metaphorical analysis of Obama's speech, a brief summary of the immediate setting and a synopsis shall prove useful. According to Parsons and Hamburger (2009), Obama delivered his speech to a crowd of more than 20,000 people in Prague's Hradcany Square, a district known for its historic castles and streets. Collinson (2009, p. A6) describes the mood in Prague as "euphoric" on the eve of Obama's arrival, a scene characterized by "late-night revellers mingling with young Obama fans." The speech

lasted slightly less than thirty minutes and was primarily epideictic and deliberative in nature.

The President began his presentation by stating he was proud to speak in Prague and then provided a brief summary of the history of the city and the Cold War; he (2009, para. 7) stated that one reason why "we are here today" was the uprising of the Czechoslovak people and the Prague Spring. After this, Obama (2009) proceeded to discuss "common" traits shared by the people of Prague and the world, including "security" and "humanity" before returning to the topic of the Cold War. The second major section of the speech described "the trajectory we need to be on," including a new arms reduction treaty and a global ban on nuclear testing. He then stated North Korea and Iran were nations that "broke the rules" and argued that the people of the world must cooperate to guarantee terrorists will never gain nuclear weapons. Obama argued there were two paths to choose from, one that led to war and one that led to peace, and concluded by endorsing the later and reiterating the history of peaceful Czech protest.

**The Journey to Prague over a Bridge Constructed Under Contract**

Based on this foundation, I explore how Obama used metaphors to construct a distinct worldview for his audience that persuaded them to support his plan for nuclear arms reduction. In what follows, I discuss three key metaphors used in this speech: the journey, Prague, and construction, before discussing a potential lingering metaphor from earlier discourses, the game, and explaining how Obama's potential game metaphors are not as detrimental as those used by earlier rhetors because Obama's potential game metaphors more closely correspond to a legal contract. Ultimately, Obama was able to use

metaphor to his rhetorical advantage and transcend the limitations faced by earlier nonproliferation activists.

**The Journey**

To begin, just as Obama used the metaphor of the journey to describe his own Presidential campaign, so too did he use the journey to describe the transition to a reduction in nuclear weapons. Paralleling his own, literal, journey to Prague, Obama (2009, para. 2) spoke about Czech independence leader Tomas Masaryk and stated he was "honored to follow his footsteps from Chicago to Prague." The metaphor built a connection with the audience standing before Obama and helped establish a relationship between the metaphor of the journey and Prague, the proper destination; the journey metaphor created a sense of agency for the audience. As Lakoff and Johnson (1989) find, a conception of human existence as a journey recognizes that human beings possess the ability to choose their route and their destination. In this case, the journey metaphorically reinforced Obama's (2009, para. 46) statement that "Human destiny will be what we make of it." Much as Darsey (2009) found in Obama's election campaign, the President laid out two paths for the audience and suggested that they possessed the power to determine their destination. Obama (2009, para. 27-33, 36) spoke of one option, which he defined as "the trajectory we need to be on." This journey led to an American reduction in its own reliance on nuclear weapons, a new arms reduction treaty with Russia, a global ban on nuclear testing, and a new "framework for civil nuclear cooperation." This was a path that led to "security and respect."

However, for the journey metaphor to succeed in creating a sense of agency for the audience there must be another alternative, for, as Obama (2009, para. 11) stated, "We

have a choice to make." In the 2008 election, Darsey (2009) discovered that Obama contrasted a path that led to his election as President with the mundane, quotidian, and dangerous path of tradition. Such a strategy again arose in the "Prague Speech." Obama (2009, para. 22) explained that "through a strange turn of history" the end of the Cold War was followed by an increased risk of nuclear attack. Related to this, Obama (2009, para. 43) stated that for the other path, we "know where that road leads... We know the path when we choose fear over hope.... That's how wars begin. That's where human progress ends." Darsey (2009) emphasized that a key element of the journey metaphor is that it leads to a destination. In this case, the destination of the path Obama spoke against was both a beginning and an end; a beginning of war, an end of progress. Obama (2009, para 33-34) engaged in an act of descriptio, and stated that North Korea must "know the path to security and respect will never come through threats and illegal weapons" and, for Iran, "peaceful nuclear energy" is a "path that the Islamic Republic can take. Or the government can choose increased isolation, international pressure, and a potential nuclear arms race." Significant for this speech, Obama recognized agency even in those nations he suggested were most likely to deviate from the proper path; by doing so, he avoided a key weakness of the rhetors studied by Ivie (1987) who all too often defined the Soviet Union as passive and inert. Unlike the ontological foreclosure established by George W. Bush's "axis of evil," Obama (2009, para. 33) rhetorically constructed a choice for even North Korea and Iran could "change course."

**The Person of Prague**

The journey endorsed by Obama resulted in immediate arms reductions and the end of nuclear weapons; symbolically, it also led to Prague and peace. One of the dominant

traits critics such as Terrill (2009) have found in Obama's speeches is the tendency of the President to use his own body, his own being, to encapsulate different ideas without resolving contradictions between them. In this speech, Obama used not his own body, but that of Prague, to contain the contradictions between Western and Eastern Europe under the rhetoric of peace. A foundational principle of international relations is that scholars conceptualize the nation-state as a person, a single actor, despite the fact that it is a vast collection of different peoples and desires. As political scientist Wendt (2004, p. 289) explains, "to say that states are 'actors' or 'persons' is to attribute to them properties we associate first with human beings." Thus, the person of Prague came to embody the successful end of the journey to a nuclear free world. At one point the President (2009, para. 19) went so far as to state that if nuclear war occurred, cities such as Prague that "embodied the beauty and the talent of so much of humanity, would have ceased to exist." Prague signified both the contradictions of history and the potential of the future. Obama proclaimed:

> You've known war and peace. You've seen empires rise and fall. You've led revolutions in arts and science, in politics and in poetry. Through it all, the people of Prague have insisted on pursuing their own path, and defining their own destiny (2009, para. 3).

In this manner, Prague embodied the contradictions of the Cold War and the contradictions of history without suppressing them; the city represented the proper end point for the world's journey. For the President, the people of Prague were imbued with agency and pursued their own path, much like potential voters possessed agency in the 2008 Presidential election. Obama (2009, para. 4) stated that few "would have predicted that

someone like me would one day become the President of the United States," and that "few would have imagined that the Czech Republic would become a free nation, a member of NATO, a leader of a united Europe." Just as Obama embodied the proper path for the 2008 election, so too did Prague embody the proper path for the world's nuclear journey.

Even more significant for Obama, Prague is peace. While embodying the divisions of history, Prague symbolized a destination that all nations could reach, for according to Obama (2009, paras. 6, 45), the actions of its citizens demonstrated that "freedom is a right for all people, no matter what side of a wall they live on, and no matter what they look like." Peaceful Czech dissidents "helped bring down a nuclear-armed empire without firing a shot" and Obama (2009, para. 3) announced that "this Golden City which is both ancient and youthful- stands as a living monument to your unconquerable spirit." The location for this speech, which the President (2009, para. 1) noted was "the middle of this great city, in the center of Europe" reinforced Obama's metaphor. As Brussat (2006) explains, unlike other major European capitals, Prague was only bombed once during World War II, and this bombing was likely a mistake. Furthermore, the Soviets did not destroy the center of Prague as part of their suppression of the Prague Spring; they left it virtually untouched. The physical surroundings symbolically reinforced the reality and value of Prague as a metaphor for peace. Embodied in peaceful Prague, the divisions of the past were transcended rather than destroyed.

**Constructing One Path, Preventing the Other**

Relying on the history of the Cold War, Obama employed construction metaphors to explain how to rebuild the divisions that separated the world for the last century. Perhaps no object better symbolized the Cold War than the Berlin Wall, a human

constructed barrier between East and West Berlin in Germany. In his research published on the eve of the end of the Cold War, Bruner (1989, p. 326) found that the Berlin Wall reflected "the never-completed struggle between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union, between the cultures these nations have made, and between the nations these cultures have made." When praising Prague's people, Obama (2009, para. 9) referenced this metaphor, "They believed that walls could come down; that peace could prevail" and revealed his alternative to the wall, a bridge. Obama (2009, para. 19, 27, 33, 34) argued that it was necessary to "pursue constructive relations with Russia," "take concrete steps," and "build a new framework," because "we need a structure in place." In his penultimate sentence, the President (2009, para. 46) stated, "Let us bridge our divisions, build upon our hopes, accept our responsibility to leave this world more prosperous and more peaceful than we found it." There were close parallels between this vehicle and Ivie's (1987) suggested "spaceship earth" and "rowboat earth" metaphors for international relations, with the exception that the bridge metaphor correlated more closely with the land based path Obama envisioned, as opposed to Ivie's metaphors that were more closely tied to the air and the water.

The President used construction metaphors not only to describe the path the global community must build, but also the improper path that some wished to create. In terms of the current economic downturn, Obama (2009, para. 13) argued in favor of "action coordinated across borders" in order to resist "the walls of protectionism that stand in the way of growth." Likewise, Obama (2009, para. 30) expressed concern that "the technology to build a bomb has spread. Terrorists are determined to buy, build or steal one" and that the only response was a global regime based on a cooperative treaty designed "to cut off the building blocks needed for a bomb." For Obama (2009, para. 38), the end goal was the

elimination of the potential for nuclear terrorism, meaning that "the driving force for missile defense construction in Europe will be removed." Obama rhetorically created two paths the nations of the world could build; one that led to peace, which must be constructed through unity, and another that led to nuclear annihilation, which must be prevented through unity. Overall, Obama created a synergy between these metaphors that transcended the rhetorical divisions of the Cold War.

**Of Contracts and Earlier Metaphors**

One must recognize a metaphor in the words of Obama that might sound like a game. Ivie (1987, p. 169) found that one reason why American politician Henry A. Wallace was unable to persuade his audience to support non-proliferation was his use of terms in the game cluster including "game," "race," "cards," "competition," "play," "vie," "pawn," and "team." Wallace failed because he "called for playing by the rules in a friendly game of power politics." On first glance, one might view Obama as falling victim to this tendency. Out of Ivie's game cluster, Obama (2009, para. 8, 33, 37) used the words "arms race" and "play" once and twice respectively. More potentially worrisome were Obama's (2009) six references to "rules." One might suspect that Obama was playing yet another game, one he, like Wallace, was destined to lose.

However, Obama did not revive Wallace's game metaphor but instead replaced it with a contract. A contract is a legally enforceable promise and a means to prevent violence; Fried (1981) explains that contract law is advantageous for society because it replaces violent, individual enforcement of promises with state action. The rules, or laws, are necessary to determine what is sanctioned by the state and what rights are recognized. To an extent, it was natural for Obama to discuss a contract, for he was proposing a series

of nuclear weapons treaties, international agreements or contracts among nations to be enforced by the global community. That this was the language of contracts and not games becomes apparent in Obama's speech. For Obama (2009, para. 28, 17-18), the goal of negotiations with Russia will be a "legally binding" agreement, and "an attack on one is an attack on all. That is a promise for our time, and for all time. The people of the Czech Republic kept that promise." Furthermore, a contract is often thought of as a bargain or a negotiation; Obama (2009, para. 32) reflected this meaning of the word when he stated "the basic bargain is sound: Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy." Obama desired to craft a contract with the world, not play games.

Obama discussed contractual violations by nations such as North Korea and Iran, nations that seemed unlikely to sign any nuclear non-proliferation treaty. For example, Obama (2009, para. 35, 32) said "North Korea broke the rules" and that there must be consequences for "breaking the rules." He (2009, para. 36) accused potential nuclear proliferators of violating the law of nations and stated, "Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something." Obama recognized not only the importance of language, but also the importance of contract. Yet, one is left to ponder, what treaty, what contract could North Korea or Iran have broken? How can the terms of an international contract be enforced if a nation never agreed to the terms?

This confusion may be clarified by considering principles of customary international law. Customary international law is best conceptualized as an international form of common law that all nations need not overtly consent to. Villiger (1985) explained that jurists working at the International Court of Justice recognize that customary

international law is based on the common practices of a number of states, not all. Therefore, it becomes possible for nations such as North Korea and Iran to be bound by a customary law that they consented to by failing to object. For example, one may argue that the clear, constant, and vocal opposition to the use of nuclear weapons that has existed over the past half of a century has created just such a customary contract. For Obama, North Korea and Iran risked breaking customary international law if they followed the wrong path and violated a contract between nations.

## Implications

Based on this analysis, several implications are warranted. My examination of Obama's "Prague Speech" suggests the value of perspective when conceptualizing the selection of metaphors. Also, this investigation demonstrates the importance of the relationship between metaphor, rhetor, and situation and finally suggests the need for further research focused on the literal connection between a metaphor and the speaker's current circumstances.

### Transcending the Dichotomy

Obama transcendenced the savagery/civilization dichotomy through his use of the journey/contractually constructed bridge/Prague metaphors. Unlike earlier rhetors, Obama did not attempt to reverse the savagery/civilization binary and suggest that Americans were really savages and our opponents were really civilized. Instead, he contrasted an uncivilized, warlike past with a peaceful future and argued that everyone, even past warmongers, could journey to Prague and embrace peace. That Obama's nuclear non-proliferation overcomes this divide becomes even more apparent when one examines his selection of tenors. Consider the figures studied by Ivie (1987) and the tenors they chose to

metaphorically develop. Wallace's game metaphors highlighted a continuing division between the United States and the Soviet Union and argued that the United States of America and not the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was to blame for the Cold War. Likewise, J. William Fulbright used psychological disturbance as a strategy to challenge the supporters of nuclear weapons. Yet, he, too, created a metaphor that was, according to Ivie (1987, p. 175) "at best, overdeveloped for the United States and underdeveloped for the Soviets." Finally, Helen Caldicott emphasized the rhetoric of madness and again focused attention on the United States and away from the Soviet Union. As Ivie (1987, p. 176) stated, "Her near total dependence on the MADNESS metaphor has left her unable to mollify America's fear of the enemy." As Ivie recognized, these peace activists created metaphors that almost exclusively focused on one tenor, the USA, and neglected the other, the USSR. By doing so, they lost potential support because audiences saw the ideas of the idealists, and their metaphors, as unrealistic.

In contrast, Obama's vehicles, the journey, the contractually constructed bridge, and Prague, were applied to both the United States and its potential enemies. Obama did not reverse the dichotomy; he transcended it. To be clear, Obama was not creating a bridge between the Soviet Union and the United States or a bridge between the United States and its more contemporary rivals, North Korea and Iran. Instead, the bridge crossed from the past to the present; it was part of the path that all nations journey. Indeed, Obama (2009, para. 46) stated, "Let us bridge our divisions, build upon our hopes, accept our responsibility to leave this world more prosperous and more peaceful than we found it," suggesting the transition from past to future and a world that journeyed toward peace. As Obama (2009, para. 11) stated, "Now, we share this common history. But now this

generation — our generation — cannot stand still. We, too, have a choice to make" (2009, para 11). Obama metaphorically recognized a dichotomy but this was between two generations, not two rival nations. Through his use of language, Obama avoided the dangerous linguistic divisions of prior nonproliferation activists.

However, Obama anticipated that not all nations would choose to walk the path of peace; he argued for unity, he did not assume it. In contrast to earlier rhetors, Obama warned that those nations that deviated from his path would be punished. Ivie (1987, p.172) faulted Wallace for focusing "guilt" on the United States alone, causing him to be "easily dismissed as Russia's naive apologist." Likewise, Ivie (1987, p. 176-177) found that Fulbright erred by asking his audience to "take on faith" that the Soviet Union would adopt a peaceful perspective and Caldicott failed because she presented the Soviet Union as essentially "the victim of America's craziness." Unlike the rhetors studied by Ivie, in Obama's (2009, para. 33) speech "pressure" existed for those who violated the rules. Obama (2009, para. 32) said those who deviated from his proposed path would face a "strong international response." Obama rhetorically described a bridge that was used not to transcend national rivalries but the division between a contentious past and a peaceful present.

Obama (2009, para. 30, 32, 40, 35) supported "a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials," stronger "international inspections," "a new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world" and "a new and more rigorous approach to address this threat." According to Obama (2009, para. 35-36) "North Korea broke the rules" and "violations must be must be punished." Any punishment would be multinational, not unilateral. As Obama (2009, para. 44) stated, "There is violence and

injustice in our world that must be confronted. We must confront it not by splitting apart but by standing together." The President avoided the traps of the failed metaphors of the past and suggested that all nations possess agency. By doing so, Obama appeared less an idealistic advocate for appeasement and more an enforcer of the international rule of law.

**Why Obama Answered Ivie's Question Now**

Obama answered Ivie's question, but another question must be raised in this discussion, especially when Darsey's (2009) research is considered. Why did the world wait more than twenty years for Ivie's (1987, p. 180) "replacement metaphor?" Has the world waited for the proper rhetor or the proper situation? In support of the proper person, one need only recall Darsey's (2009) insight that Obama used a journey metaphor throughout his Presidential campaign. If this enabled Obama to answer Ivie's question, the answer should be conceptualized as the result of Obama's metaphorical style. Second, it may be easier for an elite rhetor such as Obama to employ the language of treaty and contract than individuals such those studied by Ivie (1987), who included Wallace, a renege third party Presidential candidate, Fulbright, a Senator but still a person who lacked the authority to propose or sign treaties, and Caldicott, an Australian pediatrician. As part of his Presidential powers, Obama possessed the agency to create and sign treaties, not merely advocate for them. As such, a metaphor may sound more persuasive and realistic when issued from his lips.

Yet other signs suggest context as an important factor for Obama's transcendence of the civilization/savagery divide. By 2009, Americans did not completely conceptualize the world as marked by an American/Soviet divide. More than twenty years ago, even Ivie (1987) offered only slight mention of China and thought of his replacement metaphor as

one that represented relationships between the "superpowers," one that would be closely connected to "US-Soviet relations." While I certainly cannot fault Ivie for failing to predict a future imagined by practically no one, the reader should recall that European Communism collapsed in 1989, and that current threats to the nuclear non-proliferation regime originate in East Asia and the Middle East, not Moscow. With the end of the Cold War came an end to the paranoia Ivie (1987) noticed in nuclear discourse. While nuclear weapons form a part of the discourse of terrorism, so do suicide bombers and sarin gas; the nuclear threat is now one among many. Likewise, the Prague metaphor would be unthinkable prior to 1989. After the suppression of the Prague Spring, the city was fully under the Iron Curtain and was not a happy admixture of socialism and capitalism. For the transcendental metaphor of Prague as peace to exist, Prague needed a peaceful revolution. Without this context, no audience could find the Prague metaphor rational or realistic.

When examined more closely, Ivie's work suggests that, as he saw the problem, it was not a matter of rhetor or history but one of invention. Indeed, Ivie (1987, p. 180) stated that "the time for rhetorical transcendence has arrived," but "the mechanism of invention has yet to be discovered." A creative metaphor, one not inherent in the rhetor or the current context, provided one component of Obama's solution, a bridge constructed by the people of the world. The rhetorical resources for the construction metaphor certainly existed in 1982 and before. Indeed, talk of Iron Curtains and Berlin Walls may be traced as far back as Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy. The creativity Obama demonstrated by recognizing and applying this metaphor may be his greatest rhetorical contribution to the debate, for he perceived a rhetorical resource that was available but that other leaders failed to grasp for decades.

However, I suspect Obama only succeeded because of the connection between this metaphor and the journey, a metaphor drawn from his 2008 campaign repertoire. In the "Prague Speech," Obama envisioned not a bridge between the United States and Russia, nor a bridge between the United States and Iran, but a bridge between the past and the future, very similar to the rhetorical journey of his 2008 campaign. By doing so, Obama rhetorically removed the dichotomy of savagery and civilization to a form of consubstantiality. Prague became the embodiment of Obama's (2009, para. 46) "better future" because "together we can do it." Through peaceful Prague Obama created not two symbiotic creatures but one united, yet diverse world people. Obama's metaphor was the result of a particular conjuncture of context, rhetor, and invention.

**Metaphors with a Literal Connection**

Finally, Kuusisto (2002) recognizes the importance of literal metaphors, ones that are a part of ordinary language. Obama repeatedly utilized the metaphor of a journey and literally journeyed to Prague. He (2009, para. 1) referred to this in his speech and stated that he was "proud to be the man who brought Michelle Obama to Prague" and then discussed the literal journey of Masaryk, a Czechoslovak independence leader who journeyed from Prague to Chicago and back to Prague. Obama (2009, para. 2) stated, "I am honored to follow in his footsteps from Chicago to Prague." For Obama, there was both a literal and a metaphorical journey. Likewise, Obama (2009, para. 45) mentioned the "voices that still echo through the streets of Prague" while literally standing above the very same Prague streets used by dissidents as sites of protest during both the Prague Spring and the Velvet Revolution. This literal connection likely strengthened Obama's message. Audiences may be more willing to accept a journey metaphor spoken by one who has

recently journeyed to their locale. Further research is needed to examine the persuasive possibilities of such a connection, for example, to determine if metaphors of "light" or "dark" gain more power when used in a physical locale that is "light" or "dark."

Almost thirty years after Ivie asked for a replacement metaphor that could transcend the dichotomy between savagery and civilization in the nuclear non-proliferation debate, Barack Obama provided an answer. Examining the context of this speech, the metaphorical approach to criticism, uncovering Obama's journey to Prague by way of a contractually constructed bridge, recognizing that all nations have the possibility to walk on this path, and further investigating how and why these metaphors succeeded has offered a richer understanding of Obama, the nuclear weapons controversy, and the use of metaphor. As Obama (2009, para. 45) stated, the Czechs "helped bring down a nuclear-armed empire without firing a shot." Perhaps the metaphor of Prague will likewise one day lead to the destruction of all nuclear weapons without another detonation.

# SECTION FOUR: THE OBAMA DOCTRINE?:OBAMA'S NEW, BLENDED NARRATIVE ON LIBYA


## Abstract

In this section, I consider Obama's speeches about the Libyan movement for democracy from the perspective of narrative criticism. Following the work of prior scholars, I find that three narratives circulated prior to Obama's Libyan speeches that focused on unilateral realism, isolationism, or internationalism. I find that Obama crafted a new narrative that centered on internationalism and subsumed rival discourses. Through this narrative, Obama crafted an identity for the people of Libya that was based on agency and an identity for Americans based on international cooperation, rather than imperialism. I argue that Obama's speeches on Libya serve as a representative anecdote for his foreign policy and rhetoric toward the Middle East, and support this through narrative criticism of later speeches, including Obama's speech about the death of Osama bin Laden.


## Introduction

In the spring of 2011, Barack Obama was silent. For nine days, Libyan leader Mommar Qaddafi responded to peaceful protests demanding democratic change in his nation with violence. Obama said nothing. As Dobkin (1992) notes, in times of political crisis the press demand that the President of the United States play a leading role; Obama's reluctance to do so led to severe criticism. As Rubin (2011) wrote for *The Washington Post,* "in another demonstration of moral and political paralysis, the Obama administration is saying little about the brutal Libyan crackdown and doing even less." In the *London Telegraph,* Spillius (2011) questioned Obama's "strange silence on Libya." Not just journalists, but also members of the public found the President's lack of comment

disturbing. Posting to the Huffington Post's website, user Koolmorning (2011) stated, "It's inexcusable for Obama to be silent about the brutality of the Gaddafi regime" and Karen (2011) posted to the Lonely Conservative blog, "For a guy who loves the spotlight, President Obama sure has been quiet since the mass murders in Libya began." A discussion board was even created for the subject at Yahoo Answers (2011). Answers included "Would you leave him alone? He's in the middle of an important [golf] putt" and "Obama doesn't care about the Libyan people."

When Obama finally spoke, he did so through a narrative that established a new identity for the people of the Middle East and for American foreign policy. I contend that Obama was reluctant to break his silence concerning events in Libya because he was faced with a difficult choice between competing narratives. Obama's choice to combine several prior narratives together into a new story was crucial, as the narrative Obama developed will help determine the future of not only America's foreign policy, but also America's identity in the world. Fisher (1987, p. 187), the founder of narrative theory in the field of communication, notes, "all good stories function in two ways: to justify (or mystify) decisions or actions already made or performed and to determine future decisions or actions." Obama's initial silence indicated that the President was unsure of the future course for the American people. Each potential foreign policy narrative circulating in American discourse represented a competing vision for the identity of the American people. When he responded to the events in Libya nine days after they began, Obama (2011, para. 3) told the nation that America's response would be guided by its "core principles" and created a narrative based on these values. When Obama finally allowed his

voice to be heard, he crafted a narrative of internationalism that stood in stark contrast to the unilateral stance of his predecessor, George W. Bush.

Narrative theory provides an appropriate lens for understanding Obama's rhetoric because Brown (1990) explains that international events are fundamentally constructed and understood in the form of a story. Brown finds that the manner in which a narrative is told shapes an audience's impression of the event and how the audience believes one should respond to it. Stories presented by a President are especially important; Edwards and Valenzano (2007, p. 305) contend that "Presidents act as the chief storytellers for the American people, and as such, articulate narratives that emphasize the course the United States should embark upon with the world." In order to better understand Obama as rhetor and his future trajectory for American foreign policy, I analyze Obama's speeches on the revolution in Libya through a narrative approach. In what follows, I first examine the historical and political circumstances in which the Libyan protests occurred. Next, I consider narrative criticism more broadly and reflect on the connection between identity and foreign policy. I then analyze Obama's speeches based on the competing perspectives for American foreign policy that circulated at the time of his speech: unilateral realism, isolationism, and internationalism. Finally, I conclude by considering the ramifications of this analysis for narrative theory and international relations.

## The West and the Middle East: A Complicated History

To understand the competing narratives that surrounded Obama requires an understanding of the historical relationship between the United States and the Middle East. I first review the history of American imperialism in the region. Next, I discuss relevant

aspects of Libya's unique history before finally locating these speeches within a current context shaped by terrorist attacks and mass movements for democracy.

**Pax Americana**

With the decrease and eventual end of European colonialism in the Middle East at the close of World War II came the presence of another actor, the United States. As Milton-Edwards (2006, p. 18) states, "the USA became an increasingly important influence in the region, heralding an era of neo-imperialism or pax Americana which persists to the present day." Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the American influence persisted, despite Milton-Edwards' (2006) contention that the United States was "reviled" in the region. Little (2008) emphasizes the important role oil from the Middle East played in the Allied defeat of Germany in World War II, a lesson the United States never forgot. American access to secure oil reserves was seen as the key to stability at home and abroad after the war. Mufti (1999) contends that in addition to pursuing oil, the United States also sought to include Middle Eastern and North African states in its anti-Communist fold. Toward this goal, America opposed Arab unity on the grounds that such an alliance could challenge the United States. America supported local leaders who opposed Communism, even if they were non-democratically elected dictators. America's historic relationship with the Middle East has been marked by self-interest.

A key historic event in the Middle East continues to shape American foreign policy in this region, the fall of the Shah of Iran, one of America's key allies from the 1950s to the 1970s. The fall of the Shah provides an important reminder of the difficult relationship between the American government and democratic dissidents in the Middle East. Little (2008) reveals that in the 1950s, America supported Iranian dictator Mohammed Rez

Pahlavi, the Shah, a leader who was challenged by protestors demanding land reform and the nationalization of Western oil companies. Some politicians in the United States feared a Communist takeover of Iran and supported a military coup that overthrew the Iranian prime minister, who was seen as supporting these populist urges, before he could remove the Shah from power. The United States and the Shah appeared victorious, and they were, for a short time.

To discourage future protests, America pushed the Shah to implement reform in Iran; these reforms largely failed. Elton (2001) contends that the Shah was never able to deliver necessary services, such as electricity, to his people and that most of Iran's oil revenues went into the hands of the Shah's cronies or foreign corporations. Because of their focus on Soviet sympathizers, the United States and the Shah's regime largely ignored Muslim fundamentalists and their opposition to the Shah's government. While the Shah was an American ally, President Jimmy Carter repeatedly shifted his stance concerning the relationship between the Shah and the United States, at times pressing for democratic reform, at times supporting the Shah's power. Street protests against the Shah began in the late 1970s and repeatedly resulted in armed conflict. In the face of massive opposition, Pahlavi fled Iran and control shifted to Ayatollah Khomeini, a Muslim religious leader. Under Khomeini's regime, fifty-two Americans were taken hostage at the American embassy and were not released until after the election of Ronald Reagan.

These incidents played a significant role in Carter's failure to win a second term in office and served as a warning for other politicians. As Little (1999, p. 214) concludes, "Nowhere in the Middle East did the United States push more consistently for reform and modernization after 1945 than in Iran, and nowhere did America fail more spectacularly."

Iran provides two possible lessons for the United States and its relationship with Middle Eastern nations. First, Iran can be viewed as an American failure because America did not support the protestors of the 1950s and instead supported a dictator. Second, Iran could be viewed as an American failure because Carter, did, reluctantly, support the protestors of the 1970s, some of whom established a fundamentalist regime that still challenges American hegemony today. From this perspective, Carter aided in the creation of an anti-American government and the United States would have been better off if he had propped up a dictator. The memory of the Iranian revolution influences contemporary relations between America and the Middle East. For Libya, they serve as a reminder to any American President that the narrative he establishes is accompanied by risk. Neither supporting the protestors nor embracing historical allies is guaranteed to benefit the United States or to aid in ones re-election campaign.

**The Status of Libya**

As part of North Africa and the Middle East, Libya's history has, to a large degree, been shaped by events that have influenced the region as a whole; yet, it also possesses idiosyncratic qualities that require special attention. In ancient times, Libya was home to the Carthaginians, the main rivals of the Roman Empire, an empire that plays a key role in the historical imagination of the West. Wright (2010) reveals that the Phoenician city of Carthage, located in modern day Libya, became a center of power in ancient times and repeatedly challenged Rome for dominance in the Mediterranean, eventually leading to the destruction of Carthage at the hands of the Romans. While the land remained under Roman rule for many years, it continues to serve as a binary for the opposition between Roman/Not Roman and Western/Not Western. When considering America's foreign

relations with Libya, one must remember that these policies not only concern two nations, but symbolize relations between the West and Middle East more broadly.

The modern nation of Libya, which was created after World War II, first existed as a monarchy under the rule of King Idris al-Sanusi. Vanderwalle (1998) notes that in the early 1960s, Libya experienced an oil boom that increased the prosperity of some of its citizens. While oil brought wealth for some Libyans, it would lead to political changes for all Libyans. Fearing growing opposition from members of the military, King Idris left Libya on a personal trip to Turkey; he never returned. Inspired by the success of Nasser's revolutionary regime in Egypt, Mommar Qaddafi, a colonel in the Libyan army, seized power during King Idris's absence. Wright (2010) notes that Qaddafi expelled Western military bases from the country, nationalized Western businesses, and destroyed or forbid other symbols of the West such as night clubs, churches, the production and sale of alcohol, and the use of Latin script, toward the goal of creating a state of the masses. Control and ownership over the oil industry was slowly returned to Libya.

By the 1980s, Libya was experiencing a decline in its oil revenues. Vandewalle (1998) documents a drop in revenue from $21 billion to $5.4 billion. At the same time Libya's economy was declining, Wright (2010) notices an increase in repression at home and a desire to engage in conflict abroad. Parallel to the Libyan tendency toward international violence, American President Ronald Reagan was engaging in more aggressive actions against Libya. He banned oil imports from Libya in 1982 and, according to Vandewalle (2006), bombed Libya in 1985 as punishment for terror attacks in Rome and Vienna that he associated with Qaddafi. Simons (2003) continues by revealing that American politicians strongly suspected that Libya participated in the bombing of a

Berlin nightclub in 1986 and bombed a Pan American World Airways flight in 1988. America and Britain held Libya legally responsible for the bombing. Wright (2010) reveals that in 1992, the United Nations demanded that Libya hand over suspects for the Pan American bombing and when Libya refused, sanctions were imposed. Following this came a failed coup in 1993 and renewed relations with the United States in the early 2000s, as Qaddafi offered to help the United States seek and destroy terrorists who also were working to destabilize his regime.

Libya has served as a symbol for the Middle East not only in ancient times, but also in the contemporary era. Indeed, Dobkin (1992) argues that Reagan attacked Libya in 1986 not because of overt wrongdoing on the part of Libya but because the United States was not able to take action against terrorists in other nations. Bombing Libya seemed an expedient way to end the tale of terrorist attacks against the United States that the American government had failed to respond to. In other words, Reagan used Libya as a scapegoat to express the American public's distress over terrorist attacks that originated elsewhere which the United States could not easily respond to. Such a dynamic tension should be considered for future analyses of Libyan-American relations. Just as Reagan made Libya into an example of what happens when one displeases the United States, so too may Libya serve as a rhetorical example for America's future stance on Middle Eastern politics, and its relationship with the democratic movements occurring in this region of the world.

**From Terrorism to Mass Movements for Democracy**

The most important events in the history of the Twenty-First Century for Americans, thus far, have been the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001. The narratives associated with these attacks offered a potential rhetorical resource

for Obama. As Milton-Edwards (2006) suggests, the events on that day radically altered American foreign policy. They made the Muslim world a top priority for the American administration, increased domestic interest in foreign policy, and led to President George W. Bush's promise to take the battle abroad. Some argued that the events symbolized the need for America to reengage with the world, while others contended that the foundations of American society, democracy and freedom, were under attack and coupled this claim with a new distaste for the Middle East.

The attacks on September 11 led to renewed debate in the United States about the role America should play in global society and who we are as a people. LaFeber (2002) argues that September 11 led to opposition within the United States to the increasing fragmentation of global society and encouraged the idea that the United States should play a leading, some would say imperial, role in foreign affairs in order to prevent future attacks. Perhaps most significantly for the analysis that follows, the events of September 11 prompted the leaders of the United States to constantly consider the impact of their foreign policy in the Middle East on terrorism. One of America's main goals in the region became the prevention of terrorist attacks; any statements written and spoken about Libya would require the President and his advisors to consider how they might inspire or calm potential terrorists.

Likewise, one cannot forget that after the attacks on September 11, the United States became involved in two wars in the Middle East. Based on allegations that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein supported international terrorism and possessed weapons of mass destruction, the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 and fought what initially appeared to be a quick and successful war. Milton-Edwards (2006, p. 254) describes Bush's tone toward

the region after September 11 as "bullish and confrontational," and contends that "this tone was reflective of how deeply felt was the need to recover the myth of US hegemony and invincibility in relation to the region and its peoples." In addition to the war in Iraq, the United States fought another war in Afghanistan. Jalali (2003) finds that, as in Iraq, the American invasion led to what appeared to be a quick and total victory. However, the prospect of recreating the government of Afghanistan, rebuilding the nation, and ensuring peace proved far more difficult. Immediately prior to the protests in Libya, America engaged in two unsuccessful wars in the Middle East that won it few friends. This context would make America reluctant to fight yet another inconclusive ground war in the region and to respond to events in Libya with words rather than weapons.

One unintended legacy of the Bush administration and its costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was the deterioration of the American economy, a key factor in understanding the complicated American response to events in Libya. Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and his research partner Linda Bilmes (2008) contend that the expenses of the Iraq war alone will be $3-5 trillion dollars. While some disagreed about the true cost of America's foreign policy interventions, most agreed that by the time of the protests in Libya, the United States economy was weak. For example, the *New York Times* (2011) reported that the United States was in the grips of the worst economic situation since the Great Depression. Likewise, high unemployment and uncertainty about rising oil costs led Wessel (2011, p. A2) to conclude that, "just when the sun seemed to come out, storm clouds are gathering on the economic horizon." In addition to a weakened economy, attention was being drawn the status of America's rather large debt. Sahadi (2011) reported that in January of 2011, the American debt reached $14 trillion, more than the

legal limit; at this level of debt, each individual American owed approximately $45,000. Given the economic crisis in the United States, questions existed as to whether America could realistically afford another war in the Middle East, even if it so desired.

One reason for the continued instability and weakness of the United States economy can be traced to the Middle East. Over the past several years, Middle Eastern nations experienced political protests against dictatorial regimes; the United States supported many of these dictators. Uncertainty over these political events caused oil prices to fluctuate and weakened the global economy. Most notably, in December 2010, protests began against Tunisian President Ben Ali. Despite opposition from the government and violence from the military, the Jasmine Revolution, as it became known, successfully led to the overthrow of Ben Ali's dictatorship. Events in Tunisia dispelled key myths about the power of democrats and dictators in the Middle East and North Africa. Nematt explains:

> Perhaps the most important myth is that the Arab regimes, most of which have been ruling for decades, are too resilient and cannot be toppled, except through foreign military intervention or an inside coup or seizure of power. The other myth now being seriously questioned throughout the Arab media is that Islamists are the only alternative to these secular or apparently secular regimes (2011).

Salem and Awad (2011) reported that success in Tunisia led to protests elsewhere in the Middle East, most notably in America's key ally Egypt, where dissidents demanded the end to Egypt's repressive emergency law which had been in place for more than thirty years. Amanpour and her colleagues (2011) reported that after eighteen days of peaceful protest, thirty year Egyptian dictator and American ally Hosni Mubarak resigned; his resignation occurred mere days before protests began in Libya. As Heilman (2011)

commented, "the Arab street suddenly has discovered its power, and it's ushering in change from Tunis to Amman." Significantly, at this time the two most prominent leaders to fall to the Arab street were both key American allies, Ben Ali and Mubarak. Libya was the first nation where a potential enemy could fall.

In Libya, protestors encountered a different situation; initially, it appeared that protests in Libya would follow the path of protests in Tunisia, a quick and largely bloodless revolution. However, unlike other leaders who encountered the activists of the Arab Spring, Qaddafi responded with violence and severe repression. He announced that he would kill protestors "house by house," leading *New York Times* reporters Fahim and Kilpatrick (2011) to characterize Libya as existing in a "state of terror." The protests in Libya resulted in a cycle of violence at the hands of Qaddafi's government. Shadid (2011) described the events. Protestors challenged the Libya state. Government troops attacked and killed the protestors. Their funerals turned into new scenes of protest. The government attacked the protestors. The cycle repeated.

Qaddafi used military force to an extent not seen in Tunisia or Egypt. Specifically, Ackerman (2011) reported that he used war planes and rockets against cities that were viewed as disloyal to his regime. Qaddafi, unlike prior leaders, was largely able to silence his critics in the Libyan capital city and push them out of the center. His soldiers drove the rebels west, away from Tripoli and toward Egypt. Crilly (2011) reported that by March of 2011, Qaddafi's troops were within the city of Benghazi, the rebel's stronghold, and Qaddafi was threatening his opponents with genocide. Unlike the situation in Egypt or Tunisia, Obama faced a clearer, more pressing exigence— genocide.

## Narratives of Foreign Policy and Identity

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to consider prior research in the field of narrative criticism. Toward this goal, I first highlight the origins and fundamentals of narrative theory and then explore the connection between identity and narrative in foreign policy. Finally, I discuss how one may study narratives through the use of the representative anecdote.

### The Origins and Fundamentals of the Narrative Approach

The beginnings of this theory may be traced to Walter Fisher (1984), the individual that was primarily responsible for introducing the narrative paradigm into the field of communication. Fisher's 1984 article, "Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case for public moral argument" lighted the fires of many rhetorical scholars and critics. Narrative theory provides a particularly rich body of work for the study of rhetorical criticism. As Fisher writes:

> The narrative paradigm can be considered a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands that recur in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme. The narrative paradigm implies that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories or accounts competing with other stories or accounts (1987, p. 58).

Fisher (1984) outlines the basic elements of this strategy. First, humans are by their very nature story telling beings. Second, narratives are more persuasive than logical arguments; humans judge a story based on "good reasons" that are shaped by history, biography, culture and character. What constitutes "good reasons" in one context may not in another. Edwards and Valenzano (2007) reveal that the world is conceptualized as a realm of

competing narratives that constantly circulate and recreate what qualifies as the "good reasons" for a particular time and context. For example, prior narratives of American exceptionalism, the belief that American is a special nation, different from all others, originated in the colonial era and still circulates today. However, what being an "exceptional nation" means has shifted over time from being a nation removed from international affairs to one deeply engaged in global politics. Fisher (1984) finds that humans evaluate a story from the perspective of narrative probability, which refers to whether a story sounds coherent and internally makes sense. It includes whether the story flows smoothly, if the story is congruent with other stories the audience has heard, and if the characters are believable. Humans also evaluate stories based on narrative fidelity. According to Fisher (1984, p. 8), this refers to "whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives." These tenets form the foundation for narrative criticism.

**Narrative as Identity**

Narratives are particularly important for understanding the identity of a people. Indeed, identity is one of the main reasons why scholars contend that a focus on argumentation should be complemented by the study of narration. Redick and Underwood (2007) extend the ideas of Fisher and clarify that both traditional rationality and narrative are fundamental requirements for personhood; one must be rational in order to interpret the world. They (2007, p. 398) argue that one must have a concept of self identity, and this requires that "I must have a basic story of self." For these authors, adopting a narrative approach does not entail the rejection of reason; narratives complement and reinforce reason by addressing how an individual or a group develops the identity and the sense of

self necessary to engage in discourse. The connection between narrative and identity has existed since Fisher first introduced the approach to the field of communication. In his seminal article on the subject, Fisher (1984, p. 14) noted, "Any story… implies an audience, persons who conceive of themselves in very specific ways. If a story denies a person's self-conception, it does not matter what it says about the world." When examining Obama's use of narrative, one must consider how this story shapes the identity of the American people and the identity of the people of the Middle East.

Prior narratives of what it means to be an American influence the stories America's leaders construct about international affairs. As Zietsma (2008, p.180) contends, "The language of foreign relations reflects dominant cultural narratives of national identity." Dorsey and Harlow (2003) trace narratives of American identity back to the Mayflower, and the first colonists who arrived in New England. The stories told by the first European Americans emphasized their difference from those still in Europe and centered on how the colonists were transformed through their encounters with the wilderness of the Western Hemisphere into a new people. This story of American difference and exceptionalism continues to this day, and has been documented by scholars including Dorsey and Harlow (2003), Edwards (2009), Lewis (1987), Rowland and Jones (2007), West and Carey (2006), and Zietsma (2008) who have traced it across history; it has been found in the speeches of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. A key component of the narrative of America exceptionalism is that Americans are a special people, different from all others.

As Lewis (1987) notes in his impressive scholarship on Reagan's use of narrative, American history is portrayed as a struggle for progress against obstacles which have

expanded to include not just barbaric enemies in the wilderness but also economic and political adversaries. America's story is a tale of impressive heroes and villains based on the themes of freedom and economic progress. Rowland and Frank (2007) find that the key tool for Barack Obama's success as a politician has been his ability to tap into this narrative and use it for his own purposes. In the domestic arena, they uncover that Obama was able to attach to Reagan's story of economic freedom the importance of a level playing field for all. Prior to Obama's election to the Presidency, Rowland and Frank (2007, p. 428) presciently noted that Obama's speeches demonstrated the "possibility of a sea change in political ideology, based not on policy but on narrative preference." Following their lead, I attempt to explore the potential sea change Obama's narrative of the Middle East, and Libya, in particular, forecasts for the international arena.

Prior narratives of Middle Eastern identity are also important for understanding Obama's speeches on Libya. As noted earlier in this essay, one of the key barriers to narrative dialogue is the failure of one party to recognize the identity, and the very right to exist, of the other party. Fisher (1984) contends that without such recognition, a narrative is bound to fail. As Rowland and Frank (2011) find, the very identity of some members of the Middle East, the Palestinian people, has been literally denied for decades by the government of Israel, a strong ally of the United States. They argue that the failure to recognize one another is the main reason peace has not been achieved between Palestine and Israel. Likewise, Takacs (2005) argues that the concept of Orientalism best describes Middle Eastern identity as constructed in the West. According to Takacs (2005), Middle Eastern identity, when recognized at all in American discourse, is portrayed as weak and feminized; she found that George W. Bush defined the people of the Middle East as too

weak to save themselves from oppression without American aid. However, the people of the Middle East have not been powerless to challenge this narrative. Humphries (2008) reports that people in the Middle East have used traditional protests and modern technologies, such as the Internet, to oppose their oppression. Likewise, Brown (1990) finds that in the 1980s Lebanese leader Nabih Berri convinced the American people, and Reagan, to avoid a military solution to the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 through a powerful narrative that emphasized shared values and the importance of family. The people of the Middle East have been oppressed through narrative and have used narrative as a strategy to challenge their oppression.

**Libya as Representative Anecdote for the Middle East**

In this essay, I treat Libya as a representative anecdote for America's, and Obama's, policy toward the Middle East. Based on the work of Burke (1945), a representative anecdote is used for study due to the overwhelming availability of data; because so much information and evidence exists, some information must be selected and some must be omitted. When using this method, a scholar selects a case to represent the general approach of a rhetor to a larger issue. McCann (2010) writes that when using a representative anecdote, the critic carefully selects a faithful representation of the discourse of interest. The representation, or anecdote, allows one to summarize the basic elements of a discourse to determine how it works without having to handle the whole. According to Brummett (1984), the representative anecdote provides the shape of the basic vocabulary of a discourse; it contains the form or the outline of a particular story. McCann (2010, p. 399), clarifies that it is "a pattern that renders coherent the experiential resonance of a discourse by illuminating its fidelity to a prevalent cultural storyline." Wess (2011) explains that the

use of a representative anecdote parallels the use of a test case at the Supreme Court. Perhaps the best example of the representative anecdote in the field of narrative foreign policy analysis is provided by Edwards and Valenzano (2007) in their study of Bill Clinton's rhetoric of partnership with Africa, and via Africa, the world. Using Clinton's narrative as a representative anecdote, they find that the story of a "new partnership" embedded in Clinton's discourse during his trip to Africa served as an anecdote for his narrative of global relations with the entire world. By studying Clinton's foreign policy speeches in Africa, they were able to obtain a better understanding of all of his foreign policy speeches.

In what follows, I seek to determine if and how Obama's narrative of Libya serves as a broader representative anecdote for his policy toward the Middle East. Libya provides a particularly apt case for understanding Obama's stance toward this region, and toward foreign policy more broadly. Leaders ranging from the Romans to Reagan have treated Libya not only as its own nation, but as a symbol for the region. In particular, Dobkin (1992, p.156) quotes and supports the contention of Laqueur that Qaddafi is a person of "little consequence." Yet, in the past he has been pushed into a starring role as the villain in dramas between the United States and the Middle East because of the need to use Libya as a symbolic resource. For example, Dobkin (1992) reveals that a series of terrorist attacks occurred in the 1980s that Reagan and the United States were unable to adequately respond to. To end the media narrative of these terrorist attacks, Qaddafi, an enemy the United States could easily defeat, was transmogrified into a villain and then punished, providing closure to the tale. In what follows, one should remember the history of using Libya as a representation of broader conflicts and bigger enemies.

## Competing Tensions and Transcendence in the President's Libyan Speeches

One gains insight into Obama's use of narrative and conceptualization of Middle Eastern identity by examining his stance and speeches on the status of Libya. Toward this goal, Obama's rhetoric will be examined through the lens of three competing narratives of American foreign policy and related strands of international relations theory. As Dobkin (1992) explains, a narrative does not exist in a vacuum; rather, prior narratives circulate and recirculate throughout society, such as the narrative of American exceptionalism discussed earlier. Takacs (2005) and Dobkin (1992) demonstrate that a narrative is not a magic bullet that once spoken has an immediate and predictable effect on an audience but instead is molded by the media and the history through which it travels. Past narratives continue to circulate in society and impact the narratives of the present. For example, Edwards (2009) finds that narratives of American identity that were dominant at the turn of the Twentieth Century are again circulating at the dawn of the Twenty-First Century. Similarly, Edwards and Valenzano (2007) find that narratives of the Cold War shaped Clinton's "new partnership" story. Obama's Libyan narrative was crafted in the context of prior tales.

Obama rejected two prior narratives and then blended them into a third. Obama (2011, March 28) rejected narratives that claimed the United States should engage in unilateral action to overthrow Qaddafi, rejected narratives that claimed the United States should do nothing, and finally, endorsed a narrative of international cooperation that subsumed elements of the two prior tales. In what follows I examine Obama's rhetoric and how it challenged or endorsed these three competing narratives in American culture: the realist unilateralism of Cowboy diplomacy, the Jeffersonian isolationism of the good

neighbor, and the idealism of international cooperation. I then consider how Obama merged them to form a new narrative that represented Obama's future stance on relations with the Middle East.

**Cowboy Diplomacy: We're On Our Own**

The first approach to narratives of foreign relations in the United States is that of the realist, unilateral Cowboy diplomat. This understanding of America's relationship with the world was dominant under Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, and may be traced back to the realist and neorealist schools of international relations. Waltz (1979) contends that the foundations of the realist approach, which he refers to as Realpolitik, originated with the writings of Machiavelli and his focus on the needs of the state; from this perspective, policy makers reach decisions based on what is best for their nation. Success is used to judge the merits of a policy, and unilateral realists determine success based on how well an action preserves and strengthens the state and its leaders. Writing from this vantage point, Lieber (2009, p. 20) states, "Politics involves injustice because politics entails the use of power to compel others. Clean hands in international politics are impossible." Keohane (1986) argues that realism and its focus on power have been the center of American foreign policy since 1945. Since that time, Americans have discussed foreign policy not in terms of universal ideals, norms, or values, but rather through the language of raw power and self-interest.

Unilateral realism correlates with Dobkin's (1992) analysis of Reagan's terrorism rhetoric. Dobkin (1992) reveals that Reagan and the American mass media constructed a narrative of an American President on a heroic quest that resulted in the bombing of Libya. Rather than react based on international morals or values, Reagan responded to terrorism

with unilateral military action. This story of American unilateralism became even more dominant under the leadership of George W. Bush. Williamson (2010) discovers that the attacks on September 11 were portrayed by Bush as an uninvited threat. In order to prevent future attacks, the Bush administration argued that the American military must engage in unilateral aggression, which they said truly was a form of defense, rather than attack. Similarly, West and Carey (2006) find in the narratives of George W. Bush what they refer to as the "old west fantasy." The ultimate goal of the policy articulated in this narrative is to defend the community and preserve its safety. Rather than be guided by morals or universal principles, the vigilante lawman of this tale, according to West and Carey (2006, p. 387), seeks to "defend the community through a mixture of virtue and vice." They find that Bush adopted this stance and treated Iraq as an "outlaw regime" and took actions against Iraq of dubious morality and legality. Bush became the hero of the Old West, one who engaged in vice in order to preserve the power of his state and to protect his people. Unilateral realism was closely tied to American diplomacy under Reagan and Bush.

Obama's speeches and comments on Libya are remarkable both for the absence and presence of realist tendencies. First, the small number of realist references contradicted the Cowboy diplomacy of Bush and Reagan and signified a new approach to foreign policy. However, the continued existence of these strands suggests that a rhetoric of national interest has not been completely displaced. Obama's (2011, Feb. 18) first thoughts on Libya, a mere ninety-four word statement, reflected elements of unilateral realism. Obama said, "I am deeply concerned.... The United States condemns the use of violence." One hears the concern of one person and one nation, not the world. Likewise, in his major

speech on Libya, Obama (2011, March 28, para. 4) noted America's "unique role as an anchor of global security," offering further evidence of unilateral realism.

While never again suggesting unilateral action, Obama's words resonated with other elements of the realist perspective, notably national security and costs. Obama (2011, Feb. 23, para. 2), stated, "First, we are doing everything we can to protect American citizens. That is my highest priority" and in a letter to the House of Representatives (2011) wrote that Libya constituted "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States." He also (2011, March 18) referenced Qaddafi's historic sponsorship of terrorism, including attacks against the United States. During the conflict, Obama (2011, March 26, para. 11) announced that American soldiers "once again have stood up for our interests and ideals." Obama proclaimed the importance of security for the United States:

> As Commander-in Chief, I have no greater responsibility than keeping this country safe.... I will never hesitate to use our military swiftly, decisively, and unilaterally when necessary to defend our people, our homeland, and our core interests (2011, March 28, para. 33).

Obama reaffirmed a realist interest in the state and the power and protection of the United States.

A second realist concern arose in these words. In the same speech, Obama addressed whether the burdens of war could overtax the American nation. He warned against a land invasion of Libya and the President (2011, March 28, para. 30) contended, "To be blunt, we went down that road in Iraq.... But regime change there took eight years, thousands of American and Iraqi lives, and nearly a trillion dollars. That is not something

we can afford to repeat in Libya." Balancing this, Obama (2011, March 28) noted the high costs that would occur from thousands of additional refugees if an intervention against Libya did not take place. He (2011, March 18) also referenced the burden of fighting a third war against Libya while having to fight wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Overall, Obama's speeches are characterized by a story that recognizes realist concerns for security and expenses, but not the desire to return to the days of unilateral Cowboy diplomacy.

**Isolationism: Stay Home**

A second approach to international diplomacy is most closely associated with the Founding Fathers of the United States, and George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in particular. Famously, Washington (1796) warned against American involvement in the affairs of foreign nations in his final speech as President and stated:

> The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop…Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course (1796, para. 36-37).

This trend was continued by Thomas Jefferson, who, despite his sentiments against war and foreign entanglements, fought America's first foreign war after Independence against a nation that would one day be known as Libya. Even more so than Washington, Jefferson feared engagement with other nations. Jefferson (1999, p. 552) was reluctant for the American people to participate in commerce, let alone political alliances with other states. At one point he announced that the United States should "practice neither commerce nor navigation, but to stand, with respect to Europe, precisely on the footing of [Isolationist]

China. We should thus avoid wars." LaFeber (1993) notes that Jefferson's dislike of war and militarism may be traced to his support of Congress and belief in a weak Presidency, for Jefferson saw war as an excuse that could be easily used to bolster the power of the executive office. Jefferson conceptualized of war as something to be avoided, and to avoid war, one must avoid becoming involved in foreign affairs.

While less common in American discourse than other narratives, Jefferson's legacy continues to shape American foreign policy. Edwards (2009) finds a distinct strand of isolationism in the debates that occurred in the United States over whether America should join the League of Nations after World War I. Under the leadership of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, those opposed to joining the League constructed a story where America would lead by example, rather than by action. These individuals developed a narrative that envisioned America would become involved in unnecessary future wars due to treaty obligations associated with the League. They countered this with a story of America serving as a city on a hill and leading by example rather than by action. During the early administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt this narrative continued. Zietsma (2008) finds that Roosevelt argued for non-intervention in the affairs of other nations, including Franco's Spain and early Nazi Germany because to do so would not be neighborly. Roosevelt created a story of America as a good neighbor, one who would lead by example rather than military action. At the end of World War II, such sentiments were largely rejected, only to reappear again after the failure of the United States in Vietnam. As Williamson (2010, p. 218) suggests, "Vietnam was more than a military defeat. By the late 1970s it became a dissonant part of the national narrative." Williamson finds that the legacy of Vietnam and its lesson in favor of

non-intervention continued to circulate in the George W. Bush era and that one reason why Bush followed a unilateralist path in the Middle East was to end the story of Vietnam.

In Obama's speeches on Libya, the Jeffersonian and Vietnam legacies live on, albeit in modified form. Only once did the subject of American isolationism arise directly, and Obama (2011, March 28, para. 23) said that the goal to avoid intervention was a "false choice." While Obama did not construct a narrative of pure isolationism, elements of this theme are found in the story he constructed about the limited role for America in foreign conflicts and in his statements that the democratic urges seen in Libya originated within Libya, and not from abroad. Isolationist tendencies were strong enough in Obama's speeches that they countered any notion of U.S. imposed regime change. First, Obama emphasized that America's decision to take action in Libyan did not signal that America would intervene throughout the world. He (2011, March 26, para. 2) stated, "the United States should not— and cannot— intervene every time there's a crisis somewhere in the world" and Obama (2011, March 18, para. 8) continued, "change in the region will not and cannot be imposed by the United States or any foreign power." This theme later arose when Obama (2011, March 28, para. 24) stated, "It's true that America cannot use our military wherever oppression occurs." Through such language, Obama created a story of limited American involvement, one where America did not impose its will on the world. Isolationism became reasoned restraint in world affairs.

Supporting this portion of the plot are Obama's statements that emphasized that democracy and freedom would result from the efforts of the people of the Middle East, not America or other foreign powers. According to Obama, America should exercise restraint because to interfere in these matters might sabotage the movement for democracy. In his

March 18 speech, immediately after stating the United States would not impose regime change, Obama emphasized that the people of the Middle East were in control of the revolution. He (2011, para. 8) stated, "It will be driven by the people of the Arab world. It is their right and their responsibility to determine their own destiny." Later Obama (2011, March 28, para. 39) reiterated, "The United States will not be able to dictate the pace and scope of this change. Only the people of the region can do that." Perhaps this perspective is best encapsulated in one of the President's speeches when he said:

> The change that is taking place across this region is being driven by the people of this region. This change doesn't represent the work of the United States or any foreign power. It represents the aspirations of a people who are seeking a better way of life. As one Libyan said, "We just want to live like human beings" (2011, February 23, para. 13-14).

Here, the President contrasted American imposition of a democratic regime with one that rose up from the Libyan people. Obama argued that through a limited role, America would preserve the conditions necessary for democracy in the Middle East; it would not impose regime change. Obama modified the themes and ideas of isolationism and used this narrative as a means to oppose and counter imperialist tendencies and to endorse Libyan self-determination.

**Internationalism: Don't Go Alone**

The third, final, and most lasting narrative found in the President's response to Libya is that of idealistic internationalism. Rommen (2009) writes that idealism, which he refers to using the less common name utopianism, gained large support after World War I and the birth of the League of Nations. This perspective is based on the idea that war and

conflict can be avoided if states transfer some of their individual authority to the collective global community. In 1977, the political scientists Keohane and Nye (p. 6) announced that they had noticed a "new rhetoric of interdependence." The concept of interdependence represents the idea that nations mutually rely on each other; interdependence is more than interconnection. It includes situations of mutual harm, as well as mutual benefit. Some nations may need to respond through collective military action based on this principle, for action may be required to preserve an alliance. Keohane and Nye (1977) contend that supporters of internationalism in foreign affairs believe that the world is too complex to be satisfactorily understood through the realist concept of power hungry, independent states seeking unilateral influence and control. Instead, they draw attention to cooperation and interaction among nations. Supporters of this theory believe that as the world becomes more global, interdependence increases and the need for and success of independent actors decreases.

Nowhere is the narrative of internationalism better expressed than in the words of President Woodrow Wilson, the main advocate for American membership in the League of Nations. Wilson constructed a narrative which argued America would avoid war through internationalism and membership in the League. As Edwards (2009, p. 277) notes, "For the president, the ultimate enemy was not a specific nation-state or enemy but a state of mind and being, that of war." From Wilson's perspective, through the creation of the League of Nations, the global community would replace wars with legalistic and administrative procedures. Kraig (2002) finds that Jimmy Carter also endorsed an internationalist path while President. Early in his administration, Carter responded to the failure of the Vietnam War by emphasizing human rights rather than political power; he

contended that morality should guide American policy. However, this stance was later abandoned by Carter as he had to address the "realities" of the Iran hostage crisis and his own declining popularity. Internationalism returned to prominence under the administration of Bill Clinton whose "new partnership" foreign policy anecdote contained many old elements of internationalism. As Edwards and Valenzano (2007) reveal, Clinton coupled American leadership with an appeal for global cooperation. In his speeches, Clinton emphasized that America and Africa/the World shared common opportunities and challenges. Edwards and Valenzano (2007, p. 311) emphasize that Clinton's story was based on the idea that, "American leadership depended greatly on the partnership of other nations; the more partners, the more peace throughout the world." The narrative of internationalism emphasizes the connections that exist among nations and that through collective action America will create a more peaceful world.

Internationalism was the dominant narrative endorsed by Obama in his speeches on Libya; it served as the framework in which the other, competing narratives were subsumed and transcended. Themes that emerged in this narrative included: allies, the United Nations, collective values, and humanitarianism. Throughout Obama's speeches, one finds frequent references that remind audience members that the United States is not acting alone. For example, Obama (2011, March 28) announced that America was working in partnership with the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates to respond to the events in Libya. In another speech Obama (2011, February 23) stated that the European Union, the Arab League, the African Union, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference all opposed Qaddafi's actions. Notably, this international coalition included not only historic American allies such

as Great Britain but also nations such as Denmark and Norway that are not frequently active in military affairs. Even more significant are references to Muslim nations such as Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates; their inclusion suggested that this would be less a clash of civilizations and more an international policing mission. Likewise, when threatening to take military action against Libya, Obama (2011, March 18, para. 12) stated, "The United States is prepared to act as part of an international coalition. American leadership is essential, but that does not mean acting alone- it means shaping the conditions for the international community to act together." By the time of his next speech, America was no longer leading the efforts against Libya, allowing Obama (2011, March 28) to state that NATO had taken control of the embargo and no-fly zone. Obama was weaving a narrative about a global coalition, not merely a story about the United States and a few of its allies.

The legal and administrative procedures of the United Nations played a key role in Obama's rhetoric and correlated with an internationalist perspective. In his first spoken words on the subject, Obama (2011, February 23, para. 6) announced that a unanimous Security Council passed a resolution condemning Qaddafi's actions and stated that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was traveling to Europe for a special Human Rights Council session on Libya. Several weeks later Obama (2011, March 18) referenced United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 and reminded listeners that it authorized the creation of a no-fly zone in Libya. Additionally, Obama (2011, March 28, para. 26) informed his audience that one reason for American intervention in Libya was the legitimacy of the United Nations and its administrative proceedings, for if America failed to intervene, "the writ of the United Nations Security Council would have been shown to

be little more than empty words, crippling that institution's future credibility to uphold global peace and security." Obama's narrative of American intervention became one that portrayed the United States as enforcing the legal mandate of an international organization. Wherever he was, Woodrow Wilson likely smiled.

Indeed, even the reason for United Nations action was grounded in international values, for, according to Obama, Qaddafi had not only offended the sensibility of the United States, but the entire global community. Obama (2011, February 23, para. 4-5) said that Qaddafi violated "international norms and every standard of common decency.... These are human rights. They are not negotiable. They must be respected in every country. And they cannot be denied through violence or suppression." Obama (2011, para. 1) reiterated this on February 25 when he announced that Libya had violated "international norms and common decency." Obama (2011, March 28, para. 33) said Libya posed a threat to "our common humanity and our common security.... These are not America's problems alone but they are important to us." According to Obama (2011, March 18), the United States was not imposing its own will in Libya, it was enforcing international law. Ultimately, America's stance reflected "core principles" supported by other nations. Obama (2011, March 28) emphasized that these core principles included opposition to violence directed at ones own citizens, a set of universal rights, freedom of expression, the right to self determination through elections, and governments that respond to their people. In the President's narrative, American intervention in Libya occurred to enforce international values and norms.

Next, Qaddafi's violation of such norms, according to Obama, was leading to an international humanitarian crisis. The potential destruction of Benghazi's 700,000 human

beings played a key role in this narrative. Obama (2011, March 18) emphasized that without global intervention the Libyan dictator would slaughter his own people. Obama (2011, March 19, para. 4) said that "we cannot sit idly by when a tyrant tells his people that there will be no mercy… where innocent men and women face brutality and death at the hands of their own government." Obama (2011, March 26, para. 3) warned that "Qaddafi threatens a bloodbath." The immediate exigence of Benghazi loomed large in Obama's major speech on the situation when he stated:

> Qaddafi declared he would show "no mercy" to his own people. He compared them to rats, and threatened to go door to door to inflict punishment. In the past, we have seen him hang civilians in the streets, and kill over a thousand people in a single day. Now we saw regime forces on the outskirts of the city. We knew that if we wanted— if we waited one more day, Benghazi, a city nearly the size of Charlotte, could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world (2011, March 28 para. 11).

In this quote, several elements of Obama's narrative become apparent. The humanitarian crisis that loomed in Libya violated not only the conscience of America, but the entire world. Likewise, the response was something "we" have seen, a "we" that includes "the United States and the world." Even if the world wanted one more day to try to reconcile with Qaddafi, the humanitarian cost of that delay would have been too high for the international community to tolerate.

### Uniting Rhetorical Tensions

In this analysis, it has become apparent that several tensions exist within the rhetoric of diplomacy. This essay has explored how unilateral realist, isolationist, and

internationalist plot lines continue to circulate in American culture. Not only do these ideas exist in American discourse, they are simultaneously present in the speeches of Barack Obama. While Obama (2011, March 28) overtly negates stances that would endorse American unilateralism or isolationism, these themes do not merely serve as foils for the main story. Instead, they coexist and provide additional reasons and motivations for military endeavors in Libya. For example, Obama (2011, March 28, para. 12) told the American people that action was needed not only to support international norms but also for the realist reasons that Libya was strategically located between Tunisia and Egypt and because America's "national interests" would be violated by a potential "massacre" in Benghazi. Likewise, the President tipped his hat to isolationism and stated (2011, March 28, para. 23) that "America should not be expected to police the world." Despite labeling each option in Libya that corresponded with a realist and isolationist perspectives as a "false choice," Obama (2011, March 28, paras. 23) did not reject these ideas so much as blend them into a master narrative of internationalism that subsumed the competing stories.

Carcasson (2000) reveals that when competing narratives exist, the best manner to resolve the tension between the two is not to argue for the acceptance of one narrative and the rejection of others, but rather to construct a new narrative that transcends the boundaries between the binaries. For example, Carcasson (2000) finds that Clinton successfully transcended the competing narratives of the Israelis and Palestinians during the Oslo Peace Accords. Rather than endorse a narrative of Palestinian persecution at the hands of Israelis or support a narrative of Israeli persecution at the hands of Palestinians, Clinton created a new story where peacemakers were challenged by the enemies of peace.

In Obama's case, a completely new narrative of the Middle East, one that was above and beyond realism, isolationism, or internationalism, was not created.

Instead, the three approaches were blended into a new, more pragmatic narrative of internationalism, one where Americans recognized that, according to Obama (2011, March 28, para. 35), "we should not be afraid to act— but the burden of action should not be America's alone," for, "real leadership creates the conditions and coalitions for others to step up as well; to work with allies and partners so that they bear their share of the burden and pay their share of the costs; and to see that the principles of justice and human dignity are upheld by all." While Carcasson (2000) finds in the words of Clinton an entirely new concept that replaced two competing narratives, I find in Obama's speeches words which unite the competing perspectives and establish a new narrative in which the three are transcended through commonality. Support for American action, a core element of realism, is tied to working with others, a core element of internationalism, which is then tied to a recognition that shared effort leads to a shared burden, addressing one of the major concerns of isolationism. The new narrative arises from unity rather than replacement.

**American and Middle Eastern Identities**

Next, Redick, and Underwood (2007) remind us that narratives are not only about policy, they are also about people. On a pragmatic level, the identities constructed in a narrative are key factors that influence whether the narrative succeeds. For example, Rowland and Frank (2011), conclude that one of the main reasons why peace has not been achieved between Israel and Palestine is that both nations symbolically deny the right of the other to exist. Scholars have contended that the United States, especially under the leadership of George W. Bush, engaged in similar forms of rhetorical negation. According

to Takacs (2005), Bush defined the peoples of the Middle East as others, who were so incompetent that they needed the United States to save them from themselves and their dictatorial leaders. Bush did not recognize the people of the Middle East as actors possessing agency. Because of this, peace between America and the Middle East became rhetorically impossible during his administration.

While Bush portrayed America as a superpower liberator, Obama adopted a different narrative strategy in his speeches on Libya. Rather than endorse the hyper-masculinized diplomacy Takacs (2005) recognizes in Bush's rhetoric, Obama created a more cooperative identity for the United States. Obama (2011, March 28, para. 4) defined the United States as "an anchor of global security" and as "an advocate for human freedom." In the words of Obama (2011, March 28, para. 12), America's "national interest" required that it prevent the genocidal destruction of the city of Benghazi. Furthermore, America became a world actor, working in partnership with others. In his longest Libyan speech, Obama used the word "we" sixty-six times, "us" twelve times, "international" ten times, "ally" or "allies" ten times, and "community" five times. He told a story of America working with other nations, not against them. In so doing, Obama (2011, February 23) constructed an American identity that was based on "core principles" that recognized human "suffering and bloodshed is outrageous." Fisher (1987) argues that all narratives serve to either explain the past or predict the future. Here, we witness Obama creating a vision for future American foreign policy, one that is based on cooperation and human rights, rather than the Orientalism that Takacs (2005) finds dominant in the rhetoric of his predecessor. In Obama's vision, America became an international partner in the global community, rather than a global dominator.

Not only American identity, but also Middle Eastern identity was shaped by Obama's speeches. Both Obama and Bush addressed core concepts such as freedom and democracy. However, the two differed remarkably in the manner in which these ideas were conceptualized. Takacs (2005) finds that during Bush's War on Terror, his rhetoric precluded "the possibility of Arabs and Arab societies acting on their own behalf to secure these freedoms. Instead, action is reserved for the US military, which must save Arab societies from themselves." In contrast, the international effort endorsed by Obama was based on the recognition that only the people of the Middle East and North Africa possess the power to free themselves. As Obama (2011, March 26, para. 11) stated, "The United States of America stands with those who hope of a future where they can determine their own destiny" and he (2011, March 28, para. 6) continued, "Libyans took to the streets to claim their basic rights." Even more telling, Obama (2011, February 23, para. 13) announced, "The change that is taking place across the region is being driven by the people of the region. This change doesn't represent the work of the United States." Contrary to the Orientalism observed by Takacs (2007), Obama (2011, March 28) directly stated that America could not determine the outcome of the Arab Spring, only the individuals of the region could do so. In these speeches, Obama recognized agency in the people of the Middle East.

## Libya as Representative Anecdote

Whether Obama's words on Libya truly serve a representative anecdote for the region remains to be seen, but tentative analysis of later speeches suggests this is the case. Specifically, the new narrative Obama created helps us understand and decode his ideas about foreign policy in the Middle East. As Edwards and Valenzano (2007) demonstrate,

the elements of an anecdote should be compared to a rhetor's body of work to determine if it is representative of the whole. In Obama's speeches on Libya, several themes emerge that warrant comparison. First, the President cited national security concerns and the expenses of war. He also focused on a limited role for the United States and argued that democracy came from local, rather than imperial sources. Furthermore, he emphasized internationalism through references to global organizations, common values and universal principles of humanitarianism. Do these tenets appear in additional speeches? As Obama has at least two years remaining as President and many words left to speak, this cannot be fully documented. However, since the war in Libya began, Obama has presented two significant speeches that signal his strategy in this region: his response to the death of Osama bin Laden and his speech outlining future American policy in the Middle East.

**Bin Laden: More Realism than Transcendence**

In his speech on the death of Osama bin Laden, Obama (2011, May 2, para. 3) touched on several, but not all, of the themes outlined in his Libyan speeches. Issues most closely tied to realism, those of security and costs, dominated. For example, he began with a description of the attacks on September 11 and the image of an "empty seat at the dinner table" surrounded by children who never knew their parents because their parents died during the attacks. Obama (2011, May 2) continued with a discussion of the costs of catching Obama; this time he described the costs as lost lives, rather than lost income. He also detailed the role of international cooperation in catching Bin Laden and specifically cited the assistance America received from the government of Pakistan. For example, Obama (2011, May 2, para. 6) proclaimed that "we worked with our friends and allies to capture or kill scores of al Qaeda terrorists." One reason for this cooperation was that Bin

Laden was portrayed as a person who threatened global humanitarian values. According to Obama (2011, May 2, para. 5, 13), Bin Laden "was committed to killing innocents in our country and around the globe" and was "a mass murder of Muslims. Indeed, al Qaeda has slaughtered scores of Muslims in many countries, including our own." Some components of Obama's Libyan narrative were present.

However, other themes were lacking. Specifically, a narrative that blended Jeffersonian concerns or that addressed the role of international organizations was not apparent in this speech. Nowhere did Obama qualify the capture of Bin Laden and warn that America may not have the resources for similar endeavors in the future. Nor did Obama address the importance of local action or self determination; the capture of Bin Laden became the story of a covert American military mission, not the people of the Middle East rising up against the al Qaeda leader. Likewise, while Obama mentioned partnerships, he did not reference the United Nations, international law, or administrative proceedings. These portions of the Libyan narrative do not reappear in Obama's discussion of Bin Laden for reasons which will be addressed after considering Obama's second major post-Libya speech on the Middle East.

**A Transcendent Narrative and the Future of the Middle East**

A closer fit between Obama's Libyan narrative and his later endeavors is seen in Obama's "Middle East," speech, his speech about the future of the Middle East and North Africa. In this speech, Obama (2011, May 19) reaffirmed a core set of American security interest in the region including access to energy supplies, preventing terrorist attacks, and avoiding cross border aggression. He also warned about the costs of imposing regime

change by force and mentioned that America withdrew 100,000 troops from Iraq. Realist concerns were present and were blended with other narratives in this speech.

Likewise, strands of isolationism appeared in the "Middle East" speech. Significantly, Obama recognized the agency of the people of this region and that they empowered themselves. Obama (2011, May 19, para. 2, 7) proclaimed that "Square by square, town by town, country by country, the people have risen up to demand their basic human rights" and endorsed a "story of self-determination [that] began six months ago in Tunisia." Obama portrayed current events as the result of local, rather than American action. For example, the President (2011, May 19, para. 40) discussed protests in Syria as the result of the courage of the Syrian people and stated that the people of Bahrain were engaged in "legitimate calls for reform." Obama announced his support for reconciliation between Israel and Palestine. However, he (2011, May 19, para. 65) qualified this by stating, "Ultimately, it is up to the Israelis and Palestinians to take action. No peace can be imposed on them— not by the United States; not by anybody else." Isolationist tendencies continued in this speech.

Yet, what dominated this speech was the internationalist language Obama employed, for internationalism served as the framework which blended and controlled other narrative elements. Most notably, this speech was based around a series of universal values that Obama (2011, May 19) articulated and endorsed, core principles that he said had guided the United States' relationship with the Muslim world for the past six months. He announced opposition to the use of violence and support for free speech, assembly, religion, equality, self determination, economic reform, and the transition to democracy. Obama blended the localism of isolationism with universal human values. He provided

examples of protestors from four different nations whose voices were heard, and then Obama (2011, May 19, para. 17) stated, "Those shouts of human dignity are being heard across the region. And through the moral force of nonviolence, the people of the region have achieved more change in six months than terrorists have accomplished in decades." According to Obama, the movement for self-determination in the Middle East was guided by universal human rights, rights that stood in contrast to humanitarian abuses.

Obama argued that these humanitarian abuses violated international standards and must end. He discussed how protests began in Iran and told a story about an Iranian woman dying in the street and another about the Tunisian vendor Mohammed Bouazizi who began the protest movement in Tunisia by setting himself on fire after being humiliated and degraded by the Tunisian police. Obama (2011, May 19, para. 34) stated that in Libya Qaddafi "launched a war on his own people, promising to hunt them down like rats." In response to this aggression, Obama said the United States behaved as an international actor. Obama (2011, May 19, para. 23, 34) emphasized that since his speech in Cairo two years ago, America had engaged with the Middle East based on "mutual interests and mutual respect" and noted that the war against Libya was an international effort, a result of working with "our NATO allies and regional coalition partners." He also emphasized international economic cooperation and argued that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should develop a plan to help stabilize and modernize Egypt and Tunisia's economies. The strands of Obama's transcendent, internationalist, narrative are clearly presented in this speech.

Perhaps the best explanation for the difference between the "Bin Laden" and "Middle East" speeches, as well as Obama's initial silence on the matter of Libya, has to do

with the nature of the narratives that Obama created. Fisher (1989) contends that all successful narratives either justify or mystify decisions made in the past or determine future actions. The difference between the "Bin Laden" speech and other speeches on the Middle East are explained through this observation. In the "Bin Laden" speech, Obama was justifying past actions- the pursuit and death of Bin Laden. Unlike his speeches on Qadaafi, the events concerning Bin Laden began under a different President. While Obama was the President who captured Bin Laden, the beginning of the tale and much of the chase was conducted by his predecessor, George W. Bush. This story began in the realm of Bushian unilateral realism, so it only seems fitting that its ending should be imbued by this narrative. In contrast, both Obama's statements on Libya and his "Middle East Speech" were grounded in narratives about the future; this language was designed not to justify the past but to project the path for a new journey. Given the importance of the trajectory defined by Obama, the President remained quiet on events in Libya for several days because Obama was aware of the gravity of the situation and the impact his speeches would have on his future foreign policy. When Obama finally spoke, his words were focused on the future, a future that corresponded with a new, transcendent narrative of internationalism.

## Conclusion

Fisher's narrative theory provides a useful tool for understanding Obama's rhetoric toward the people of the Middle East. This analysis suggests the continued utility of narrative theory and also complicates ones understanding of this approach. Prior scholars have seen narrative transcendence as an act of destruction and replacement. For example, Carcasson (2000) found that Clinton promoted peace between Israel and Palestine by

rhetorically replacing narratives of Israeli and Palestinian suffering at the hands of each other with a new narrative about competition between war makers and peacemakers. Likewise, Edwards and Valenzano (2007) find that Clinton constructed a new narrative for relations between the United States and the rest of the world during his trip to Africa that replaced prior Cold War positions. While there is certainly something new and unique about the narratives created by these speakers, there also are elements of prior discourses. For example, the narrative Carcasson (2000) finds in Clinton's speeches on Israel preserved the dichotomy of a battle between rival sides and Edwards and Valenzano (2007) rightly recognize that Clinton's new narrative contained elements of older narratives of American exceptionalism. Further research is needed to determine how a rhetorician may transcend prior narratives from the past while continuing to preserve some elements.

The Middle East is a region of the world that has historically had challenging and complex relations with the West. Within a context of terrorism and direct democratic protests, Obama engaged in a balancing act where he blended three competing narratives of foreign policy: realism, isolationism, and internationalism into a new narrative for America's future relations with the Middle East. In so doing, he created a tale which defined America as a global actor that obeyed international norms and supported international values. His words recognized agency in the people of the Middle East and defined them as valuable human beings who possessed the power needed to improve their lives. Initial investigations suggest that Obama's stance toward Libya serves as a representative anecdote for his policy in the region. Indeed, some, such as Little (2011), have even begun to refer to the narrative and policy found in Obama's Libyan speeches as the "Obama Doctrine." Only future studies and the test of time will be able to document if

Obama's narrative represents a lasting direction for America's relationship with the Middle East. But, one can hope.

# SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Based on the learning experience of writing these three essays and my time at NDSU, I have developed as a scholar and learned more about the field of communication. In what follows, I first develop conclusions related to the rhetoric of Obama and its connection with second modernity. In particular, I consider if these cases are representative of second modernity and how they demonstrate reflexivity and a concern with constitutive identity. Next, I explore my transition from a scholar of postmodernity to one interested in second modernity before finally concluding this portfolio.

## The Rhetoric of Second Modernity: Considering the Cases

Before discussing my own growth as a scholar and what I have learned during my time at NDSU, it will be useful to consider what lessons may be learned from these three cases, and their implications for second modernity. First, do these cases provide evidence of the rhetoric of second modernity? The answer to this question is an unqualified yes. In all three speeches, one recognizes evidence in support of Beck's (1992) theory. Obama's reliance on resources such as metaphor, narrative, and identity provide evidence that the old certainty associated with science and Neo-Aristotelian logic is no longer adequate to persuade an audience. Rather than rely exclusively on brute logic, Obama sought to persuade others by asking audience members to take on a particular identity and used resources, such as narrative and metaphor, to convince them to adopt this identity. All of the possible means of persuasion now extend far beyond the traditions of ethos, logos, and pathos, as demonstrated by the rhetoric of Obama.

**Reflexivity in the Rhetoric of Obama**

First, reflexivity is found in the cases under consideration. Reflexivity, as developed by Beck and Lau (2005), is a concept that recognizes the uncertainty of the world. Knowledge is not something that is permanent but is always open to change. As explained at the beginning of this portfolio, Beck and Lau (2005) find that the world is no longer governed by binaries. Rather than being either/or we are instead both/and. For example, rather than being peaceful or warlike, we are now both potentially peaceful and warlike. Obama's speeches provide complicated evidence for this condition because Obama emphasized division in these speeches. In Obama's (2009) "Cairo Speech," he divided members of his audience into those who supported peace versus those who opposed peace, and created a similar division in his "Prague Speech" between those who lived in the conflicts of the past versus those who embraced the peaceful potential of the present. Likewise, those in Libya seem divided by Obama (2011) between intransigent supporters of Qaddafi and democratic dissidents. How can a rhetoric that is based on merismus demonstrate the tenets of a worldview that contends "both" and "and" are possible and that "either" and "or" are fictions?

When one digs beneath the surface, Obama's speeches provide solid evidence for reflexivity. Indeed, the reflexive nature of second modern society is what enables Obama's rhetoric and allows constitutive rhetoric to serve as a persuasive resource. In each of these speeches Obama is not defining an already present identity but is constructing an identity for his audience. The reflexive and uncertain nature of second modernity means that identity is always in flux; this condition makes constitutive rhetoric possible. When viewed through the theory of Charland (1987), Obama engaged in acts of interpellation, or hailing;

he asked members of his audience to adopt identities as peaceful people, as members of the present, or as dissidents possessing agency. Without reflexivity, Obama's speeches and the field of constitutive rhetoric would make little sense. Both rest on the foundation that identity can change and that through such change, meaning may be created. Without a reflexive, flexible form of modernity, all of Obama's rhetorical hailings would be futile.

Yet, one must consider the ramifications of the identities Obama created for others. Zagacki (2007) found that Bush attempted to rhetorically create agency for the people of Iraq through his speeches and attempted to define them as democratic individuals. Yet, the material conditions of the Iraq War contradicted the words of the President. Indeed, Zagacki (2009, p. 286) describes this as the "illusion of freedom." The Iráqi people achieved "freedom" because of the intervention of the American army and then came to depend on their American occupiers for supplies and stability. A similar condition is noticed by Takacs (2005) in her analysis of the Iraq War, where she finds that the Bush administration engaged in Orientalism; American leaders defined the people of the Middle East as too weak and effeminate to liberate themselves from dictatorial despots. This problem did not arise in Obama's rhetoric. Obama still was forced to deal with the presence of American troops in other areas of the Middle East. Yet, unlike Bush, the identities created by Obama have not been imposed through an American army of occupation, for the people of Cairo, Prague, and Libya have engaged in acts marked by agency without an American occupation. Obama supported the democratic dissidents of these nations with words, not tanks. The words of Obama and the actions of the people of the Middle East are creating an identity based on agency, something that the words of George W. Bush and the actions of the American military were unable to establish.

Furthermore, in Beck's (1992) writing, reflexivity and the risk it is associated with are not portrayed in positive terms. Indeed, Beck and Lau (2005) see the uncertainty of second modernity as a trend that makes life more difficult and challenging. The reflexivity associated with second modernity leads to an anxious and uneasy population, one that lacks stable institutions that it can turn to for security. For Beck, reflexivity and risk appear as negative elements of second modernity that must be dealt with. In contrast, my study highlights the positive dimensions of reflexivity and the instability associated with second modernity. In their investigation of Obama's domestic policy rhetoric, Sweet and McCue-Enser (2010) find that Obama constructed an identity for the American people as one that is never fully constituted, "Americans," are flawed and are always engaged in the process of becoming perfect. As Sweet and McCue-Enser (2010, p. 605) write, "every rhetorical act is part of an ongoing, never finished discussion- an attempt to answer an 'unfinished call'- regarding everything from individual and collective identity, to political policy, to social norms." The instability they find in this rhetoric closely corresponds to Beck's ideas of reflexivity.

Yet, Sweet and McCue-Enser (2010) are not depressed by the results of their investigation. They do not find that Obama's creation of an unstable, unfinished American identity resulted in depression, anxiety, or stress. Instead, they conclude that the unstable nature of the identity of Obama's Americans established the very foundation of hope. Sweet and McCue-Enser (2010, p. 619) write, "Obama's articulation of 'the people' as never fully constituted, as always in the process of accomplishing or perfecting, leaves open the possibility of a hopeful future made manifest via the discourse and action of the people, by the people, and for the people." Likewise, the cases studied here demonstrate

the potential advantages of reflexivity, for they make hope possible in second modernity. In his "Cairo Speech," hope existed for relations between the people of the Middle East and America because Middle Eastern identity was unstable, which created the possibility that these people could embrace peace with the United States. In his narrative found in the "Prague Speech," hope existed because the people of the world could choose whether to journey to peace or nuclear destruction; this decision had not been foreclosed. Most prominently, the unstable nature of society offered hope for the people of Libya, because decades of rule under Qaddafi still provided no certainty that his reign would continue. Reflexivity may seem depressing for those who previously felt they were guaranteed success and victory, in particular the members of the Western world who likely compose a significant share of Beck's readership. Yet, when considered from the perspective of those who under first modernity were guaranteed naught but oppression and imperialism, the reflexivity of second modernity makes hope possible. While things might become worse, they also might become better.

**The Phronesis of Second Modernity**

Initially, as exemplified in my analysis of Obama's "Cairo Speech," I believed that the world was faced with a dichotomous choice; we could either embrace Neo-Aristotelian logic or postmodernity. However, after examining all three cases, it now seems apparent that a third option exists, to study and use the tools of second modernity, phronesis, including metaphor and narrative. Beck and Lau (2005) recognize that modernity is marked by a lack of objective knowledge and certainty. These tenets are closely connected with the study of phronesis, what Aune (2008) describes as deliberative prudence and Self (1979) defines as practical wisdom. Phronesis provides a resource that recognizes the uncertainty

associated with second modernity but avoids the nihilism of postmodern approaches. As Fisher (1984) notes while discussing narrative theory, phronesis is tied to a particular worldview, one that emphasizes the importance of practical knowledge and questions the certainty and objectivity associated with Neo-Aristotelianism; forms of criticism centered on narrative and metaphor recognize and respond to this contingency. Rhetors must reach second modern audiences through new resources. Obama's speeches and the strategies I use to study them correlated closely with a second modern view of the world. Tools such as narrative and metaphor provide the strategies necessary to respond to second modernity, and the speeches I consider serve as case studies for how agents may employ these rhetorical resources in the future. The possibility exists for future scholars to expand my endeavors. While narrative and metaphor are solid tools for second modernity, it is unlikely they are the only tools. Future resources might be found by examining prior publications from the standpoint of second modernity; others might be uncovered through the study of speeches by using a generative approach that is in dialogue with second modernity.

**Identity in Second Modernity**

All three speeches also highlight the importance of identity for second modernity. Even in my Neo-Aristotelian analysis of Obama's "Cairo Speech" I find a connection between Obama's style and how it relates to identity. In his "Prague Speech," Obama created two journeys, one that those who identified as supporters of peace could choose and one that would take the opponents of peace to self-destruction. By choosing one's identity, ones path was known. Finally, in his speeches on Libya, Obama directly created an identity for the people of the Middle East as agents through narrative and established an

identity for Americans as internationalists rather than imperialists. The frequent use of identity in Obama's rhetoric demonstrates the power and utility of this concept in second modernity. These cases reveal that identity is a powerful resource that speakers may use to persuade their audience. Because identity is reflexive in second modernity, rhetoricians may shape it to support their goals.

The role of identity in these cases emphasizes the importance of constitutive rhetoric as a field of study. More than thirty-five years ago, McGee, (1975, p. 239) asked, "How can one conceive the idea 'people' in a way which accounts for the rhetorical function of 'the people,' in arguments designed to warrant social action, even society itself?" The concept of constitutive rhetoric as elaborated and defined by McGee and his followers provides an answer to that question. My research helps further develop this scholarship and responds to one of his demands. McGee (1975, p. 248) argues that "the analysis of rhetorical documents should not turn, inward, to an appreciation of persuasive, manipulative techniques, but outward to functions of rhetoric." The cases that I study are examined in such a fashion. I consider how Neo-Aristotelianism/dual identity, metaphor, and narrative function to create an identity for audience members. Phronesis, when connected to principles of second modernity, allows rhetoricians to understand how rhetoric not only persuades members of an audience but functions as a meaning making resource for society. Not only does Obama respond to conditions of second modernity, his speeches serve as acts of creation. Through his use of narrative and metaphor, Obama created a worldview that functioned to express and reinforce reflexive identity and second modernity. Future scholars should consider not only how a good story or a good metaphor

is created, but how these are connected to identity and the broader functions of rhetoric in second modernity.

Perhaps because I am a second modernist and not a postmodernist, I recognize that a study of functions may also contribute to a study of what McGee considers mere technique. For me, an analysis of the constitutive functions of rhetoric can also inform rhetoricians about persuasive techniques that may influence an audience. For me, narrative, metaphor, and even Neo-Aristotelian logic and not the mere "manipulative techniques" conceptualized by McGee but legitimate rhetorical theories. The dialogue between "strategies" and "functions" should not be one directional; the study of functions may help inform the study of more particular rhetorical techniques. Specifically, these cases uncover a connection between identity and narrative and metaphor. As discussed immediately above, narrative and metaphor are important because they can function to create identity for audience members. Yet, identity is also important for the study of these methods, as functions shape strategies. The conditions of second modernity have the potential to connect the micro and macro approaches to the study of rhetoric. The micro-tools of rhetoric, such as metaphor and narrative, shape the larger field of constitutive rhetoric. Likewise, the insights on constitutive scholars can help metaphorical and narrative critics better understand how these micro elements function. Scholars such as McGee who examine wide ranges of discourse for their functions and scholars such as Ivie who study the smaller elements may be engaging in parallel journeys. This investigation suggests that future scholars should pay greater attention to the connection between both functions and strategies. In second modernity, tools and functions blend; the binary between macro and micro approaches to rhetoric has become ephemeral.

**From Pop Culture to Public Address**

In addition to specific lessons drawn from these cases, I have personally developed through my research and scholarship at NDSU. All of these essays focus on speeches, as opposed to media coverage or performances. This marks a significant departure from my first scholarship as an undergraduate student. In hindsight, I recognize that when I began my studies in communication at Illinois State University, I was intimidated and reluctant to study speeches in my classes; I generally would write about music videos or television. Since coming to NDSU, I have developed the resources and knowledge necessary to study speeches and no longer feel that I lack the skills to do so. I also have learned how to examine multiple artifacts in a single study. At the start of my career at NDSU, I think that I was a bit reluctant to take on the challenge of handling multiple texts, but I became more confident doing so as I gained a greater exposure to rhetorical theory and I learned that discourse shapes ones choice of artifacts; Obama presented detailed, major speeches in Cairo and Prague; in contrast, his speeches on the subject of Libya tended to be brief and necessitated a broader approach. I have learned that the nature of discourse affects what and how many artifacts are studied and I have developed the skills necessary to study multiple texts.

**Postmodern**

My growth as a scholar closely correlates with my interest in practical wisdom and second modernity. As a student in law school, I was originally interested in traditional approaches to logic and evidence. However, I began to feel that the traditions I was learning as part of my education were not the complete story and that juries and members of the American public were often persuading by factors other than the weight of the

evidence or logical arguments. As a result, I became intrigued with postmodernism and began reading the work of postmodern theorists. Yet, at the same time I tried to embrace these authors, I was growing uncomfortable with their work. I often found their style of writing difficult and unnaturally confusing, and wondered if the absolute rejection of modernity and objectivity was truly useful or necessary.

**Modern**

After several years outside of academia, my postmodern days had grown more distant, and I no longer fully identified as a postmodernist. Therefore, when I found out that one of my first assignments as a student at NDSU was to write a Neo-Aristotelian criticism, I became excited. While I knew that some rhetoricians considered Neo-Aristotelianism to be a dead field, I enjoyed learning this strategy that had once been so dominant and popular in our discipline. After wading through the often obscure language of postmodernism, I found the clear language and direct dictates of Neo-Aristotelianism compelling. I decided to write my first essay on Obama's "Cairo Speech." When I was last in school, George W. Bush had been President; I remember being depressed by the political climate and by his speeches in particular. I viewed the election of Obama as part of our national zeitgeist, an act of change, and something demanding study.

Rather than write diatribes about Bush, I could now search for positive elements in the words of Obama. Not wanting to craft a purely traditional Neo-Aristotelian criticism, I used Terrill's (2009) prior research on Obama as a guide. Terrill (2009) found that Obama's rhetoric was marked by a dual consciousness, which allowed the President to view the world through his own eyes and those of others. Based on this insight, I concluded that Obama was able to perceive himself and America from the perspective of Muslim

nations, allowing Obama to craft successful arguments that persuaded members of his audience. I learned to appreciate the guidance and structure provided by the Neo-Aristotelian approach.

**Second Modern**

Yet, when I encountered Obama's "Prague Speech," I found that Neo-Aristotelianism was not enough to fully unlock the persuasive power of this President. Inspired by the work of Ivie (1987), I became interested in nuclear rhetoric and Obama's recent decision to speak in support of arms reductions. In Obama's "Prague Speech" on nuclear weapons, I found that the key to Obama's success was not Neo-Aristotelian logic, but the metaphors the President employed. I discovered that Obama was able to overcome the savagery/civilization dichotomy that Ivie (1987) believed weakened the pleas of prior opponents of nuclear war. I found that Obama transcended this division through the metaphor of a bridge between two different eras that all nations could choose to walk together, a division between a Cold War generation and a newer generation that could choose to embrace peace. In this paper, I discovered a new strategy, metaphor, for understanding communication that avoided the extremes of both postmodernism and Neo-Aristotelianism that I had been struggling with.

In my final paper, it seemed fitting for me to continue my interest in practical wisdom and reasoning. In the spring of 2011, I could not take my eyes off of protests occurring in the Middle East, and Libya in particular. At the same time I was watching the protests unfold, I was learning more about communication theory and narrative, in particular. This led to my interest in the narratives Obama was creating about the United States and our nation's relationship with the people of the Middle East and North Africa.

Relying on the insights of Fisher (1989), I chose to analyze several of Obama's speeches on Libya and discovered that Obama blended prior theories and histories of international relations into a new narrative. Through this research, I came to recognize the power of Obama as a storyteller and learned more about how narratives influence an audience.

At the same time I was crafting my study of Obama's Libya speeches, I also was taking a course on social theory. I thought that this was an elective, and something that would not directly relate to my final portfolio. For reasons unknown to me at the time, I was drawn to the writings of Beck and decided to draft an essay exploring his theories of second modernity. Beck's ideas seemed associated with my own struggles as a scholar, but I was not able to fully connect them with my research until I was conducting a literature review for my research methods class and reacquainted myself with the scholarship on constitutive rhetoric and saw its connection to both second modernity and my interest in phronesis. Through this process, I came to recognize second modernity as a theme in my writing, and discovered that uncovering and studying the tools necessary to understand the rhetoric of second modernity was the underlying goal of my studies.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I have briefly introduced my papers, presented them, and then discussed the lessons that I have learned. My analysis of these three speeches demonstrates the importance of second modernity and suggests tools for the study of the rhetoric of second modernity. These essays represent my growing embrace of practical wisdom as a strategy for understanding what makes communication successful in second modernity. I began my career at NDSU by rejecting post-modernity and attempting to embrace the comforts of traditional Neo-Aristotelianism in my analysis of Obama's "Cairo Speech." I

then found that metaphor better represented Obama's ideas about nuclear arms reduction. Finally, I embraced narrative theory to investigate Obama's speeches on Libya. Phronesis, as expressed through metaphor and narrative, may provide the best tools for understanding communication in our current society. Rather than the glum outlook suggested by Beck, the uncertainty of second modernity makes agency, and thus hope, possible for global society; what is now needed are rhetoricians and rhetoric that may turn a hopeful future into a beneficial present.

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